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BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

THE BLIND MILTON DICTATING PARADISE LOST TO HIS DAUGHTERS

After the painting by MICHAEL MUNKACZY

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY

BY JOHN LORD, LL.D.

THE WORLD'S HEROES AND MASTER MINDS

NEW YORK
JAMES CLARKE & COMPANY

BEACON LIGHTS OF HISTORY.

By JOHN LORD, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ROMAN WORLD," "MODERN EUROPE," ETC., ETC.

VOLUME XIII.

GREAT WRITERS.

DR. LORD'S UNCOMPLETED PLAN, SUPPLEMENTED WITH ESSAYS BY EMERSON, MACAULAY, HEDGE, AND MERCER ADAM.

NEW YORK:
JAMES CLARKE AND CO.

Special 00044814
904 Lord, John
L866b Beacon lights of history
v.13

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

THIS being the last possible volume in the series of "Beacon Lights of History" from the pen of Dr. Lord, its readers will be interested to know that it contains all the lectures that he had completed (although not all that he had projected) for his review of certain of the chief Men of Letters. Lectures on other topics were found among his papers, but none that would perfectly fit into this scheme; and it was thought best not to attempt any collection of his material which he himself had not deemed worthy or appropriate for use in this series, which embodies the best of his life's work, — all of his books and his lectures that he wished to have preserved. For instance, "The Old Roman World," enlarged in scope and rewritten, is included in the volumes on "Old Pagan Civilizations," "Ancient Achievements," and "Imperial Antiquity;" much of his "Modern Europe" reappears in "Great Rulers," "Modern European Statesmen," and "European National Leaders," etc.

The consideration of "Great Writers" was reserved by Dr. Lord for his final task, — a task interrupted by death and left unfinished. In order to round out and complete this volume, recourse has been had to some other masters in literary art, whose productions are added to Dr. Lord's final writings.

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JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

1712–1778.

SOCIALISM AND EDUCATION.

BEACON LIGHTS.

ROUSSEAU.

SOCIALISM AND EDUCATION.

TWO great political writers in the eighteenth century, of antagonistic views, but both original and earnest, have materially affected the whole science of government, and even of social life, from their day to ours, and in their influence really belong to the nineteenth century. One was the apostle of radicalism; the other of conservatism. The one, more than any other single man, stimulated, though unwittingly, the French Revolution; the other opposed that mad outburst with equal eloquence, and caused in Europe a reaction from revolutionary principles. While one is far better known to-day than the other, to the thoughtful both are exponents and represent-

at[illegible] of conflicting political and social questions [illegible] agitate this age.

These men were Jean Jacques Rousseau and Edmund Burke, — one Swiss, and the other English. Burke I have already treated of in a former volume. His name is no longer a power, but his influence endures in all the grand reforms of which he was a part, and for which his generation in England is praised; while his writings remain a treasure-house of political and moral wisdom, sure to be drawn upon during every public discussion of governmental principles. Rousseau, although a writer of a hundred years ago, seems to me a fit representative of political, social, and educational ideas in the present day, because his theories are still potent, and even in this scientific age more widely diffused than ever before. Not without reason, it is true, for he embodied certain germinant ideas in a fascinating literary style; but it is hard to understand how so weak a man could have exercised such far-reaching influence.

Himself a genuine and passionate lover of Nature; recognizing in his principles of conduct no duties that could conflict with personal inclinations; born in democratic and freedom-loving Switzerland, and early imbued through his reading of German and English writers with ideas of liberty, — which in

those conservative lands were wholesome, — he distilled these ideas into charming literary creations that were eagerly read by the restless minds of France and wrought in them political frenzy. The reforms he projected grew out of his theories of the "rights" of man, without reference to the duties that limit those rights; and his appeal for their support to men's passions and selfish instincts and to a sentimental philosophy, in an age of irreligion and immorality, aroused a political tempest which he little contemplated.

In an age so infidel and brilliant as that which preceded the French Revolution, the writings of Rousseau had a peculiar charm, and produced a great effect even on men who despised his character and ignored his mission. He engendered the Robespierres and Condorcets of the Revolution, — those sentimental murderers, who under the guise of philosophy attacked the fundamental principles of justice and destroyed the very rights which they invoked.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva in the year 1712, when Voltaire was first rising into notice. He belonged to the plebeian ranks, being the son of a watchmaker; was sickly, miserable, and morbid from a child; was poorly educated, but a great devourer of novels (which his father — sentimental as he — read with him), poetry, and

gushing biographies; although a little later he became, with impartial facility, equally delighted with the sturdy Plutarch. His nature was passionate and inconstant, his sensibilities morbidly acute, and his imagination lively. He hated all rules, precedents, and authority. He was lazy, listless, deceitful, and had a great craving for novelties and excitement, — as he himself says, "feeling everything and knowing nothing." At an early age, without money or friends, he ran away from the engraver to whom he had been apprenticed, and after various adventures was first kindly received by a Catholic priest in Savoy; then by a generous and erring woman of wealth lately converted to Catholicism; and again by the priests of a Catholic Seminary in Sardinia, under whose tuition, and in order to advance his personal fortunes, he abjured the religion in which he had been brought up, and professed Catholicism. This, however, cost him no conscientious scruples, for his religious training had been of the slimmest, and principles he had none.

We next see Rousseau as a footman in the service of an Italian Countess, where he was mean enough to accuse a servant girl of a theft he had himself committed, thereby causing her ruin. Again, employed as a footman in the service of another noble family, his extraordinary talents were detected, and

he was made secretary. But all this kindness he returned with insolence, and again became a wanderer. In his isolation he sought the protection of the Swiss lady who had before befriended him, Madame de Warens. He began as her secretary, and ended in becoming her lover. In her house he saw society and learned music.

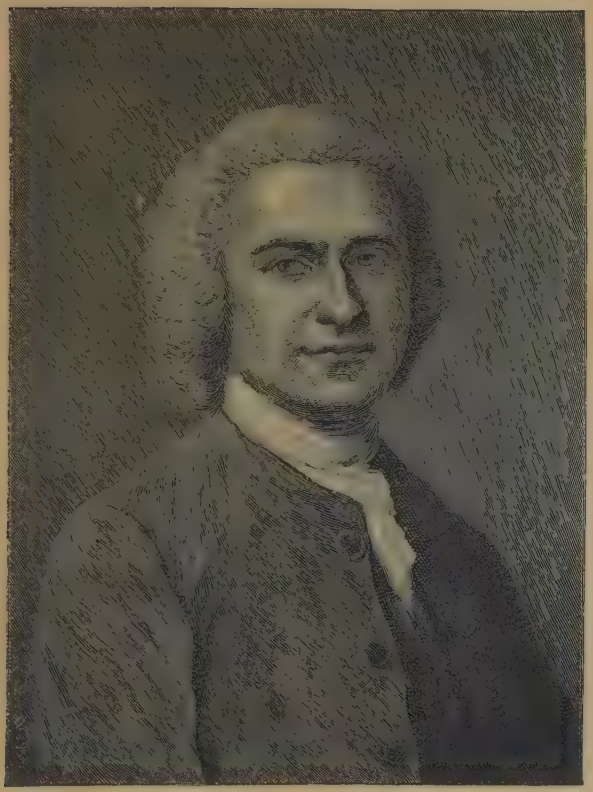
A fit of caprice induced Rousseau to throw up this situation, and he then taught music in Chambéry for a living, studied hard, read Voltaire, Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Leibnitz, and Puffendorf, and evinced an uncommon vivacity and talent for conversation, which made him a favorite in social circles. His chief labor, however, for five years was in inventing a system of musical notation, which led him to Lyons, and then, in 1741, to Paris.

He was now twenty-nine years old, — a visionary man, full of schemes, with crude opinions and unbounded self-conceit, but poor and unknown, — a true adventurer, with many agreeable qualities, irregular habits, and not very scrupulous morals. Favored by letters of introduction to ladies of distinction, — for he was a favorite with ladies, who liked his enthusiasm, freshness, elegant talk, and grand sentiments, — he succeeded in getting his system of musical notation examined, although not accepted, by the French Academy, and secured an

appointment as secretary in the suite of the Ambassador to Venice.

In this city Rousseau remained but a short time, being disgusted with what he called "official insolence," which did not properly recognize native genius. He returned to Paris as poor as when he left it, and lived in a cheap restaurant. There he made the acquaintance of his Thérèse, a healthy, amiable woman, but low, illiterate, unappreciative, and coarse, the author of many of his subsequent miseries. She lived with him till he died, — at first as his mistress and housekeeper, although later in life he married her. She was the mother of his five children, every one of whom he sent to a foundling hospital, justifying his inhumanity by those sophistries and paradoxes with which his writings abound, — even in one of his letters appealing for pity because he "had never known the sweetness of a father's embrace." With extraordinary self-conceit, too, he looked upon himself, all the while, in his numerous illicit loves, as a paragon of virtue, being apparently without any moral sense or perception of moral distinctions.

It was not till Rousseau was thirty-nine years of age that he attracted public attention by his writings, although earlier known in literary circles, — especially in that infidel Parisian *coterie*, where Diderot, Grimm,



After the painting by M. Q. de la Tour, Chantilly, France

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

D'Holbach, D'Alembert, David Hume, the Marquis de Mirabeau, Helvetius, and other wits shined, in which circle no genius was acknowledged and no profundity of thought was deemed possible unless allied with those pagan ideas which Saint Augustine had exploded and Pascal had ridiculed. Even while living among these people, Rousseau had all the while a kind of sentimental religiosity which revolted at their ribald scoffing, although he never protested.

He had written some fugitive pieces of music, and had attempted and failed in several slight operettas, composing both music and words; but the work which made Rousseau famous was his essay on a subject propounded in 1749 by the Academy of Dijon: "Has the Progress of Science and the Arts Contributed to Corrupt or to Purify Morals?" This was a strange subject for a literary institution to propound, but one which exactly fitted the genius of Rousseau. The boldness of his paradox — for he maintained the evil effects of science and art — and the brilliancy of his style secured readers, although the essay was crude in argument and false in logic. In his "Confessions" he himself condemns it as the weakest of all his works, although "full of force and fire;" and he adds: "With whatever talent a man may be born, the art of writing is not easily

learned." It has been said that Rousseau got the idea of taking the "off side" of this question from his literary friend Diderot, and that his unexpected success with it was the secret of his life-long career of opposition to all established institutions. This is interesting, but not very authentic.

The next year, his irregular activity having been again stimulated by learning that his essay had gained the premium at Dijon, and by the fact of its great vogue as a published pamphlet, another performance fairly raised Rousseau to the pinnacle of fashion; and this was an opera which he composed, "Le Devin du Village" (The Village Sorcerer), which was performed at Fontainebleau before the Court, and received with unexampled enthusiasm. His profession, so far as he had any, was that of a copyist of music, and his musical taste and facile talents had at last brought him an uncritical recognition.

But Rousseau soon abandoned music for literature. In 1753 he wrote another essay for the Academy of Dijon, on the "Origin of the Inequality of Man," full of still more startling paradoxes than his first, in which he attempted to show, with great felicity of language, the superiority of savage life over civilization.

At the age of forty-two Rousseau revisited Protestant Geneva, abjured in its turn the Catholic faith,

and was offered the post of librarian of the city. But he could not live out of the atmosphere of Paris ; nor did he wish to remain under the shadow of Voltaire, living in his villa near the City Gate of Geneva, who had but little admiration for Rousseau, and whose superior social position excited the latter's envy. Yet he professed to hate Paris with its conventionalities and fashions, and sought a quiet retreat where he could more leisurely pursue his studies and enjoy Nature, which he really loved. This was provided for him by an enthusiastic friend, — Madame d'Épinay, — in the beautiful valley of Montmorenci, and called "The Hermitage," situated in the grounds of her Château de la Chevrette. Here he lived with his wife and mother-in-law, he himself enjoying the hospitalities of the Château besides, — society of a most cultivated kind, also woods, lawns, parks, gardens, — all for nothing ; the luxuries of civilization, the glories of Nature, and the delights of friendship combined. It was an earthly paradise, given him by enthusiastic admirers of his genius and conversation.

In this retreat, one of the most favored which a or author ever had, Rousseau, ever craving some outlet for his passionate sentiments, created an ideal object of love. He wrote imaginary letters, dwelling with equal rapture on those he wrote and those he

fancied he received in return, and which he read to his lady friends, after his rambles in the forests and parks, during their reunions at the supper-table. Thus was born the "Nouvelle Héloïse," — a novel of immense fame, in which the characters are invested with every earthly attraction, living in voluptuous peace, yet giving vent to those passions which consume the unsatisfied soul. It was the forerunner of "Corinne," "The Sorrows of Werther," "Thaddeus of Warsaw," and all those sentimental romances which amused our grandfathers and grandmothers, but which increased the prejudice of religious people against novels. It was not until Sir Walter Scott arose with his wholesome manliness that the embargo against novels was removed.

The life which Rousseau lived at the Hermitage — reveries in the forest, luxurious dinners, and sentimental friendships — led to a passionate love-affair with the Comtesse d'Houdetot, a sister-in-law of his patroness Madame d'Épinay, — a woman not only married, but who had another lover besides. The result, of course, was miserable, — jealousies, piques, humiliations, misunderstandings, and the sundering of the ties of friendship, which led to the necessity of another retreat: a real home the wretched man never had. This was furnished, still in the vicinity of Montmorenci, by another aristocratic friend, the

Maréchal de Luxembourg, the fiscal agent of the Prince de Condé. And nothing to me is stranger than that this wandering, morbid, irritable man, without birth or fortune, the father of the wildest revolutionary and democratic doctrines, and always hated both by the Court and the Church, should have found his friends and warmest admirers and patrons in the highest circles of social life. It can be explained only by the singular fascination of his eloquence, and by the extreme stolidity of his worshippers in appreciating his doctrines, and the state of society to which his principles logically led.

In this second retreat Rousseau had the *entrée* to the palace of the Duke of Luxembourg, where he read to the friends assembled at its banquets his new production, "Émile," — a singular treatise on education, not so faulty as his previous works, but still false in many of its principles, especially in regard to religion. This book contained an admirable and powerful impulse away from artificiality and towards naturalness in education, which has exerted an immense influence for good; we shall revert to it later.

A few months before the publication of "Émile," Rousseau had issued "The Social Contract," the most revolutionary of all his works, subversive of all precedents in politics, government, and the organization of society, while also confounding Christianity with

ecclesiasticism and attacking its influence in the social order. All his works obtained a wide fame before publication by reason of his habit of reading them to enthusiastic and influential friends who made them known.

"The Social Contract," however, dangerous as it was, did not when published arouse so much opposition as "Émile." The latter book, as we now see, contained much that was admirable; but its freedom and looseness in religious discussion called down the wrath of the clergy, excited the alarm of the government, and finally compelled the author to fly for his life to Switzerland.

Rousseau is now regarded as an enemy to Christian doctrine, even as he was a foe to the existing institutions of society. In Geneva his books are publicly burned. Henceforth his life is embittered by constant persecution. He flies from canton to canton in the freest country in Europe, obnoxious not only for his opinions but for his habits of life. He affectedly adopts the Armenian dress, with its big fur bonnet and long girdled caftan, among the Swiss peasantry. He is as full of personal eccentricities as he is of intellectual crotchets. He becomes a sort of literary vagabond, with every man's hand against him. He now writes a series of essays, called "Letters from the Mountain," full of bitterness and anti-

Christian sentiments. So incensed by these writings are the country people among whom he dwells that he is again forced to fly.

David Hume, regarding him as a mild, affectionate, and persecuted man, gives Rousseau a shelter in England. The wretched man retires to Derbyshire, and there writes his "Confessions," — the most interesting and most dangerous of his books, showing a diseased and irritable mind, and most sophistical views on the immutable principles of both morality and religion. A victim of mistrust and jealousy, he quarrels with Hume, who learns to despise his character, while pitying the sensitive sufferings of one whom he calls "a man born without a skin."

Rousseau returns to France at the age of fifty-five. After various wanderings he is permitted to settle in Paris, where he lives with great frugality in a single room, poorly furnished, — supporting himself by again copying music, sought still in high society, yet shy, reserved, forlorn, bitter; occasionally making new friends, who are attracted by the infantine simplicity of his manners and apparent amiability, but losing them almost as soon as made by his petty jealousies and irritability, being "equally indignant at neglect and intolerant of attention."

Rousseau's declining health and the fear of his friends that he was on the borders of insanity led to

his last retreat, offered by a munificent friend, at Ermenonville, near Paris, where he died at sixty-six years of age, in 1778, as some think from poison administered by his own hand. The revolutionary National Assembly of France in 1790 bestowed a pension of fifteen hundred francs on his worthless widow, who had married a stable-boy soon after the death of her husband.

Such was the checkered life of Rousseau. As to his character, Lord Brougham says that "never was so much genius before united with so much weakness." The leading spring of his life was egotism. He never felt himself wrong, and the sophistries he used to justify his immoralities are both ludicrous and pitiable. His treatment of Madame de Warens, his first benefactor, was heartless, while the abandonment of his children was infamous. He twice changed his religion without convictions, for the advancement of his fortunes. He pretended to be poor when he was independent in his circumstances. He supposed himself to be without vanity, while he was notoriously the most conceited man in France. He quarrelled with all his friends. He made war on society itself. He declared himself a believer in Christianity, but denied all revelation, all miracles, all inspiration, all supernaturalism, and everything he

could not reconcile with his reason. His bitterest enemies were the atheists themselves, who regarded him as a hypocrite, since he professed to believe in what he undermined. The hostility of the Church was excited against him, not because he directly assailed Christianity, but because he denied all its declarations and sapped its authority.

Rousseau was, however, a sentimentalist rather than a rationalist, an artist rather than a philosopher. He was not a learned man, but a bold thinker. He would root out all distinctions in society, because they could not be reconciled with his sense of justice. He preached a gospel of human rights, based not on Christianity but on instinct. He was full of impracticable theories. He would have no war, no suffering, no hardship, no bondage, no fear, and even no labor, since these were evils, and, according to his notions of moral government, unnecessary. But in all his grand theories he ignored the settled laws of Providence, — even those of that "Nature" he so fervently worshipped, — all that is decreed concerning man or woman, all that is stern and real in existence; and while he uttered such sophistries, he excited discontent with the inevitable condition of man, he loosened family ties, he relaxed wholesome restraints, he infused an intense hatred of all conditions subject to necessary toil.

The life of this embittered philanthropist was as great a contradiction as were his writings. This benevolent man sends his own children to a foundling hospital. This independent man lives for years on the bounty of an erring woman, whom at last he exposes and deserts. This high-minded idealizer of friendship quarrels with every man who seeks to extricate him from the consequences of his own imprudence. This affectionate lover refuses a seat at his table to the woman with whom he lives and who is the mother of his children. This proud republican accepts a pension from King George III., and lives in the houses of aristocratic admirers without payment. This religious teacher rarely goes to church, or respects the outward observances of the Christianity he affects. This moral theorizer, on his own confession, steals and lies and cheats. This modest innocent corrupts almost every woman who listens to his eloquence. This lofty thinker consumes his time in frivolity and senseless quarrels. This patriot makes war on the institutions of his country and even of civilized life. This humble man turns his back on every one who will not do him reverence.

Such was this precursor of revolutions, this agitator, this hypocrite, this egotist, this lying prophet, — a man admired and despised, brilliant but indefinite, original but not true, acute but not wise; logical,

but reasoning on false premises; advancing some great truths, but spoiling their legitimate effect by sophistries and falsehoods.

Why, then, discuss the ideas and influence of so despicable a creature? Because, sophistical as they were, those ideas contained truths of tremendous germinant power; because in the rank soil of his times they produced a vast crop of bitter, poisonous fruit, while in the more open, better aërated soil of this century they have borne and have yet to bear a fruitage of universal benefit. God's ways seem mysterious; it is for men patiently to study, understand, and utilize them.

Let us turn to the more definite consideration of the writings which have given this author so brilliant a fame. I omit any review of his operas and his system of musical notation, as not bearing on the opinions of society.

The first work, as I have said, which brought Rousseau into notice was the treatise for the Academy of Dijon, as to whether the arts and sciences have contributed to corrupt or to purify morals. Rousseau followed the bent of his genius, in maintaining that they have done more harm than good; and he was so fresh and original and brilliant that he gained the prize. This little work contains the germ of all his subsequent theories, especially that in which

he magnifies the state of nature over civilization,—an amazing paradox, which, however, appealed to society when men were wearied with the very pleasures for which they lived.

Rousseau's cant about the virtues engendered by ignorance, idleness, and barbarism is repulsive to every sound mind. Civilization may present greater temptations than a state of nature, but these are inseparable from any growth, and can be overcome by the valorous mind. Who but a madman would sweep away civilization with its factitious and remediable evils for barbarism with its untutored impulses and animal life? Here Rousseau makes war upon society, upon all that is glorious in the advance of intellect and the growth of morality, — upon the reason and aspirations of mankind. Can inexperience be a better guide than experience, when it encounters crime and folly? Yet, on the other hand, a plea for greater simplicity of life, a larger study of Nature, and a freer enjoyment of its refreshing contrasts to the hot-house life of cities, is one of the most reasonable and healthful impulses of our own day.

What can be more absurd, although bold and striking, than Rousseau's essay on the "Origin of Human Inequalities"! In this he pushes out the doctrine of personal liberty to its utmost logical sequence, so as to do away with government itself, and with

all regulation for the common good. We do not quarrel with his abstract propositions in respect to political equality; but his deductions strike a blow at civilization, since he maintains that inequalities of human condition are the source of all political and social evils, while Christianity, confirmed by common-sense, teaches that the source of social evils is in the selfish nature of man rather than in his outward condition. And further, if it were possible to destroy the inequalities of life, they would soon again return, even with the most boundless liberty. Here common-sense is sacrificed to a captivating theory, and all the experiences of the world are ignored.

This shows the folly of projecting any abstract theory, however true, to its remote and logical sequence. In the attempt we are almost certain to be landed in absurdity, so complicated are the relations of life, especially in governmental and political science. What doctrine of civil or political economy would be applicable in all ages and all countries and all conditions? Like the ascertained laws of science, or the great and accepted truths of the Bible, political axioms are to be considered in their relation with other truths equally accepted, or men are soon brought into a labyrinth of difficulties, and the strongest intellect is perplexed.

And especially will this be the case when a theory under consideration is not a truth but an assumption. That was the trouble with Rousseau. His theories, disdainful of experience, however logically treated, became in their remotest sequence and application insulting to the human understanding, because they were often not only assumptions, but assumptions of what was not true, although very specious and flattering to certain classes.

Rousseau confounded the great truth of the justice of moral and political equality with the absurd and unnatural demand for social and material equality. The great modern cry for equal opportunity for all is sound and Christian; but any attempt to guarantee individual success in using opportunity, to insure the lame and the lazy an equal rank in the race, must end in confusion and distraction.

The evil of Rousseau's crude theories or false assumptions was practically seen in the acceptance of their logical conclusions, which led to anarchy, murder, pillage, and outrageous excess. The great danger attending his theories is that they are generally half-truths, — truth and falsehood blended. His writings are sophistical. It is difficult to separate the truth from the error, by reason of the marvellous felicity of his language. I do not underrate his genius or his style. He was doubtless an

original thinker and a most brilliant and artistic writer; and by so much did he confuse people, even by the speciousness of his logic. There is nothing indefinite in what he advances. He is not a poet dealing in mysticisms, but a rhetorical philosopher, propounding startling theories, partly true and partly false, which he logically enforces with matchless eloquence.

Probably the most influential of Rousseau's writings was "The Social Contract," — the great text-book of the Revolution. In this famous treatise he advanced some important ideas which undoubtedly are based on ultimate truth, such as that the people are the source of power, that might does not make right, that slavery is an aggression on human rights; but with these ideal truths he combines the assertion that government is a contract between the governor and the governed. In a perfect state of society this may be the ideal; but society is not and never has been perfect, and certainly in all the early ages of the world governments were imposed upon people by the strong hand, irrespective of their will and wishes, — and these were the only governments which were fit and useful in that elder day. Governments, as a plain matter of fact, have generally arisen from circumstances and relations with which the people have had little to do. The Oriental monarchies were the

gradual outgrowth of patriarchal tradition and successful military leadership, and in regard to them the people were never consulted at all. The Roman Empire was ruled without the consent of the governed. Feudal monarchies in Europe were based on the divine rights of kings. There was no state in Europe where a compact or social contract had been made or implied. Even later, when the French elected Napoleon, they chose a monarch because they feared anarchy, without making any stipulation. There were no contracting parties.

The error of Rousseau was in assuming a social contract as a fact, and then reasoning upon the assumption. His premises are wrong, or at least they are nothing more than statements of what abstractly might be made to follow from the assumption that the people actually are the source of power, — a condition most desirable and in the last analysis correct, since even military despots use the power of the people in order to oppress the people, but which is practically true only in certain states. Yet, after all, when brought under the domain of law by the sturdy sense and utilitarian sagacity of the Anglo-Saxon race, Rousseau's doctrine of the sovereignty of the people is the great political motor of this century, in republics and monarchies alike.

Again, Rousseau maintains that, whatever acquisi-

After the painting by Maurice Leloir

GRIMM AND ROUSSEAU AT MME. D'EPINAY'S

tions an individual or a society may make, the right to this property must be always subordinate to the right which the community at large has over the possessions of all. Here is the germ of much of our present-day socialism. Whatever element of truth there may be in the theory that would regard land and capital, the means of production, as the joint possession of all the members of the community, — the basic doctrine of socialism, — any forcible attempt to distribute present results of individual production and accumulation would be unjust and dangerous to the last degree. In the case of the furious carrying out of this doctrine by the crazed French revolutionists, it led to outrageous confiscation, on the ground that all property belonged to the state, and therefore the representatives of the nation could do what they pleased with it. This shallow sophistry was accepted by the French National Convention when it swept away estates of nobles and clergy, not on the tenable ground that the owners were public enemies, but on the baseless pretext that their property belonged to the nation.

From this sophistry about the rights of property, Rousseau advanced another of still worse tendency, which was that the general will is always in the right and constantly tends to the public good. The theory is inconsistent with itself. Light and truth do not

come from the universal reason, but from the thoughts of great men stimulated into growth among the people. The teachers of the world belong to a small class. Society is in need of constant reforms, which are not suggested by the mass, but by a few philosophers or reformers, — the wise men who save cities.

Rousseau further says that a whole people can never become corrupted, — a most barefaced assertion. Have not all nations suffered periods of corruption? This notion, that the whole people cannot err, opens the door for any license. It logically leads to that other idea, of the native majesty of man and the perfectibility of society, which this sophist boldly accepted. Rousseau thought that if society were released from all law and all restraint, the good impulses and good sense of the majority would produce a higher state of virtue and wisdom than what he saw around him, since majorities could do no wrong and the universal reason could not err. In this absurdity lay the fundamental principle of the French Revolution, so far as it was produced by the writings of philosophers. This doctrine was eagerly seized upon by the French people, maddened by generations of oppression, poverty, and degradation, because it appealed to the pride and vanity of the masses, at that time congregated bodies of ignorance and wickedness.

Rousseau had an unbounded trust in human nature, — that it is good and wise, and will do the best thing if left to itself. But can anything be more antagonistic to all the history of the race? I doubt if Rousseau had any profound knowledge, or even really extensive reading. He was a dreamer, a theorist, a sentimentalist. He was the arch-priest of all sensationalism in the guise of logic. What more acceptable to the vile people of his age than the theory that in their collective capacity they could not err, that the universal reason was divine? What more logical than its culmination in that outrageous indecency, the worship of Reason in the person of a prostitute!

Again, Rousseau's notion of the limitations of law and the prerogative of the people, carried out, would lead to the utter subversion of central authority, and reduce nations to an absolute democracy of small communities. They would divide and subdivide until society was resolved into its original elements. This idea existed among the early Greek states, when a state rarely comprised more than a single city or town or village, such as might be found among the tribes of North American Indians. The great political question in Ancient Greece was the autonomy of cities, which kept the whole land in constant wars and dissensions and quarrels and jealousies.

and prevented that centralization of power which would have made Greece unconquerable and the mistress of the world. Our wholesome American system of autonomy in local affairs, with a common authority in matters affecting the general good, is organized liberty. But the ancient and outgrown idea of unregulated autonomy was revived by Rousseau; and though it could not be carried out by the French Revolutionists who accepted nearly all his theories, it led to the disintegration of France, and the multiplication of offices fatal to a healthy central power. Napoleon broke up all this in his centralized despotism, even if, to keep the Revolutionary sympathy, he retained the Departments which were substituted for the ancient Provinces.

The extreme spirit of democratic liberty which is the characteristic of Rousseau's political philosophy led to the advocacy of the wildest doctrines of equality. He would prevent the accumulation of wealth, so that, to use his words, "no one citizen should be rich enough to buy another, and no one so poor as to be obliged to sell himself." He would have neither rich people nor beggars. What could flow from such doctrines but discontent and unreasonable expectations among the poor, and a general fear and sense of insecurity among the rich? This "state of nature," moreover, in his view, could be

reached only by going backward and destroying all civilization, — and it was civilization which he ever decried, — a very pleasant doctrine to vagabonds, but likely to be treated with derisive mockery by all those who have something to conserve.

Another and most dangerous principle which was advocated in the "Social Contract" was that religion has nothing to do with the affairs of civil and political life; that religious obligations do not bind a citizen; that Christianity, in fact, ignores all the great relations of man in society. This is distinct from the Puritan doctrine of the separation of the Church from the State, by which is simply meant that priests ought not to interfere in matters purely political, nor the government meddle with religious affairs, — a prime doctrine in a free State. But no body of men were ever more ardent defenders of the doctrine that all religious ideas ought to bear on the social and political fabric than the Puritans. They would break up slavery, if it derogated from the doctrine of the common brotherhood of man as declared by Christ; they would use their influence as Christians to root out all evil institutions and laws, and bring the sublime truths of the Master to bear on all the relations of life, — on citizens at the ballot-box, at the helm of power, and in legislative bodies. Christianity was to them the supreme law, with which all human

laws must harmonize. But Rousseau would throw out Christianity altogether, as foreign to the duties and relations of both citizens and rulers, pretending that it ignored all connection with mundane affairs and had reference only to the salvation of the soul, — as if all Christ's teachings were not regulative of the springs of conduct between man and man, as indicative of the relations between man and God! Like Voltaire, Rousseau had the excuse of a corrupt ecclesiasticism to be broken into; but the Church and Christianity are two different things. This he did not see. No one was more impatient of all restraints than Rousseau; yet he maintained that men, if calling themselves Christians, must submit to every wrong and injustice, looking for a remedy in the future world, — thus pouring contempt on those who had no right, according to his view of their system, to complain of injustice or strive to rise above temporal evils. Christianity, he said, inculcates servitude and dependence; its spirit is favorable to tyrants; true Christians are formed to be slaves, and they know it, and never trouble themselves about conspiracies and insurrections, since this transitory world has no value in their eyes. He denied that Christians could be good soldiers, — a falsehood rebuked for us by the wars of the Reformation, by the troops of Cromwell and Gustavus Adolphus, by our American soldiers in the

late Civil War. Thus he would throw away the greatest stimulus to heroism, — even the consciousness of duty, and devotion to great truths and interests.

I cannot follow out the political ideas of Rousseau in his various other treatises, in which he prepared the way for revolution and for the excesses of the Reign of Terror. The truth is, Rousseau's feelings were vastly superior to his thinking. Whatever of good is to result from his influence will arise out of the impulse he gave toward the search for ideals that should embrace the many as well as the few in their benefits; when he himself attempted to apply this impulse to philosophic political thought, his unregulated mind went all astray.

Let us now turn to consider a moment his doctrines pertaining to education, as brought out in his greatest and most unexceptionable work, his "Émile."

In this remarkable book everything pertaining to human life appears to be discussed. The duties of parents, child-management, punishments, perception and the beginning of thinking; toys, games, catechisms, all passions and sentiments, religion, friendship, love, jealousy, pity; the means of happiness, the pleasures and profits of travel, the principles of virtue, of justice and liberty; language, books; the nature of man and of woman, the arts of conventional life, politeness, riches, poverty, society, marriage, — on all

these and other questions he discourses with great sagacity and good sense, and with unrivalled beauty of expression, often rising to great eloquence, never dull or uninstructive, aiming to present virtue and vice in their true colors, inspiring exalted sentiments, and presenting happiness in simple pleasures and natural life.

This treatise is both full and original. The author supposes an imaginary pupil, named Émile, and he himself, intrusted with the care of the boy's education, attends him from his cradle to his manhood, assists him with the necessary directions for his general improvement, and finally introduces him to an amiable and unsophisticated girl, whose love he wins by his virtues and whom he honorably marries; so that, although a treatise, the work is invested with the fascination of a novel.

In reading this book, which made so great a noise in Europe, with so much that is admirable I find but little to criticise, except three things, which mar its beauty and make it both dangerous and false, in which the unsoundness of Rousseau's mind and character — the strange paradoxes of his life in mixing up good with evil — are brought out, and that so forcibly that the author was hunted and persecuted from one part of Europe to another on account of it.

The first is that he makes all natural impulses

generous and virtuous, and man, therefore, naturally good instead of perverse, — thus throwing not only Christianity but experience entirely aside, and laying down maxims which, logically carried out, would make society perfect if only Nature were always consulted. This doctrine indirectly makes all the treasures of human experience useless, and untutored impulse the guide of life. It would break the restraints which civilization and a knowledge of life impose, and reduce man to a primitive state. In the advocacy of this subtle falsehood, Rousseau pours contempt on all the teachings of mankind, — on all schools and colleges, on all conventionalities and social laws, yea, on learning itself. He always stigmatizes scholars as pedants.

Secondly, he would reduce woman to insignificance, having her rule by arts and small devices; making her the inferior of man, on whom she is dependent and to whose caprice she is bound to submit, — a sort of toy or slave, engrossed only with domestic duties, like the woman of antiquity. He would give new rights and liberties to man, but none to woman as man's equal, — thus keeping her in a dependence utterly irreconcilable with the bold freedom which he otherwise advocates. The dangerous tendency of his writings is somewhat checked, however, by the everlasting hostility with which women of char-

acter and force of will — such as they call "strong-minded" — will ever pursue him. He will be no oracle to them.

But a still more marked defect weakens "Émile" as one of the guide-books of the world, great as are its varied excellencies. The author undermines all faith in Christianity as a revelation, or as a means of man's communion with the Divine, for guidance, consolation, or inspiration. Nor does he support one of his moral or religious doctrines by an appeal to the Sacred Scriptures, which have been so deep a well of moral and spiritual wisdom for so many races of men. Practically, he is infidel and pagan, although he professes to admire some of the moral truths which he never applies to his system. He is a pure Theist or Deist, recognizing, like the old Greeks, no religion but that of Nature, and valuing no attainments but such as are suggested by Nature and Reason, which are the gods he worships from first to last in all his writings. The Confession of Faith by the Savoyard Vicar introduced into the fourth of the six "Books" of this work, which, having nothing to do with his main object, he unnecessarily drags in, is an artful and specious onslaught on all doctrines and facts revealed in the Bible, — on all miracles, all prophecies, and all supernatural revelation, — thus attacking Christianity in its most vital points, and making it of

no more authority than Buddhism or Mohammedanism. Faith is utterly extinguished. A cold reason is all that he would leave to man, — no consolation but what the mind can arrive at unaided, no knowledge but what can be reached by original scientific investigation. He destroys not only all faith but all authority, by a low appeal to prejudices, and by vulgar wit such as the infidels of a former age used in their heartless and flippant controversies. I am not surprised at the hostility displayed even in France against him by both Catholics and Protestants. When he advocated his rights of man, from which Thomas Paine and Jefferson himself drew their maxims, he appealed to the self-love of the great mass of men ground down by feudal injustices and inequalities, — to the sense of justice, sophistically it is true, but in a way which commanded the respect of the intellect. When he assailed Christianity in its innermost fortresses, while professing to be a Christian, he incurred the indignation of all Christians and the contempt of all infidels, — for he added hypocrisy to scepticism, which they did not. Diderot, D'Alembert, and others were bold unbelievers, and did not veil their hostilities under a weak disguise. I have never read a writer who in spirit was more essentially pagan than Rousseau, or who wrote maxims more entirely antagonistic to Christianity.

Aside from these great falsities, — the perfection of natural impulse, the inferiority of woman, and the worthlessness of Christianity, — as inculcated in this book, "Émile" must certainly be ranked among the great classics of educational literature. With these expurgated, it confirms the admirable methods inspired by its unmethodical suggestions. Noting the oppressiveness of the usual order of education through books and apparatus, he scorns all tradition, and cries, "Let the child learn direct from Nature!" Himself sensitive and humane, having suffered as a child from the tyranny of adults, he demands the tenderest care and sympathy for children, a patient study of their characteristics, a gentle, progressive leading of them to discover for themselves rather than a cramming of them with facts. The first moral education should be negative, — no preaching of virtue and truth, but shielding from vice and error. He says: "Take the very reverse of the current practice, and you will almost always do right." This spirit, indeed, is the key to his entire plan. His ideas were those of the nineteenth, not the eighteenth century. Free play to childish vitality; punishment the natural inconvenience consequent on wrong-doing; the incitement of the desire to learn; the training of sense-activity rather than reflection, in early years; the acquirement of the power to learn

rather than the acquisition of learning, — in short, the natural and scientifically progressive rather than the bookish and analytically literary method was the end and aim of "Émile."

Actually, this book accomplished little in its own time, chiefly because of its attack on established religion. Influentially, it reappeared in Pestalozzi, the first practical reformer of methods; in Froebel, the inventor of the Kindergarten; in Spencer, the great systematizer of the philosophy of development; and through these its spirit pervades the whole world of education at the present time.

In Rousseau's "New Héloïse" there are the same contradictions, the same paradoxes, the same unsoundness as in his other works, but it is more eloquent than any. It is a novel in which he paints all the aspirations of the soul, all its unrest, all its indefinite longings, its raptures, and its despair; in which he unfetters the imagination and sanctifies every impulse, not only of affection, but of passion. This novel was the pioneer of the sentimental romances which rapidly followed in France and England and Germany, — worse than our sensational literature, since the author veiled his immoralities by painting the transports of passion under the guise of love, which ever has its seat in the affections and is sustained only by respect. Here Rousseau was a disguised

seducer, a poisoner of the moral sentiments, a foe to what is most sacred; and he was the more dangerous from his irresistible eloquence. His sophistries in regard to political and social rights may be met by reason, but not his attacks on the heart, with his imaginary sorrows and joys, his painting of raptures which can never be found. Here he undermines virtue as he had undermined truth and law. Here reprobation must become unqualified, and he appears one of the very worst men who ever exercised a commanding influence on a wicked and perverse generation.

And this view of the man is rather confirmed by his own "Confessions," — a singularly attractive book, yet from which, after the perusal of the long catalogue of his sorrows, joys, humiliations, triumphs, ecstasies and miseries, glories and shame, one rises with great disappointment, since no great truths, useful lessons, or even ennobling sentiments are impressed upon the mind to make us wiser or better. The "Confessions" are only a revelation of that sensibility, excessive and morbid, which reminds us of Byron and his misanthropic poetry, — showing a man defiant, proud, vain, unreasonable, unsatisfied, supremely worldly and egotistic. The first six Books are mere annals of sentimental debauchery; the last six, a kind of thermometer of friendship, containing an accurate account of kisses

given and received, with slights, huffs, visits, quarrels, suspicions, and jealousies, interspersed with grand sentiments and profound views of life and human nature, yet all illustrative of the utter vanity of earth, and the failure of all mortal pleasures to satisfy the cravings of an immortal mind. The "Confessions" remind us of "Manfred" and "Ecclesiastes" blended, — exceedingly readable, and often unexceptionable, where virtue is commended and vice portrayed in its true light, but on the whole a book which no unsophisticated or inexperienced person can read without the consciousness of receiving a moral taint; a book in no respect leading to repose or lofty contemplation, or to submission to the evils of life, which it catalogues with amazing detail; a book not even conducive to innocent entertainment. It is the revelation of the inner life of a sensualist, an egotist, and a hypocrite, with a maudlin although genuine admiration for Nature and virtue and friendship and love. And the book reveals one of the most miserable and dissatisfied men that ever walked the earth, seeking peace in solitude and virtue, while yielding to unrestrained impulses; a man of morbid sensibility, ever yearning for happiness and pursuing it by impossible and impracticable paths. No sadder autobiography has ever been written. It is a lame and impotent attempt at self-justification, revealing on every page

the writer's distrust of the virtues which he exalts, and of man whose reason and majesty he deifies, — even of the friendships in which he sought consolation, and of the retirements where he hoped for rest.

The book reveals the man. The writer has no hope or repose or faith. Nothing pleases him long, and he is driven by his wild and undisciplined nature from one retreat to another, by persecution more fancied than real, until he dies, not without suspicion of having taken his own life.

Such was Rousseau: the greatest literary genius of his age, the apostle of the reforms which were attempted in the French Revolution, and of ideas which still have a wondrous power, — some of which are grand and true, but more of which are sophistical, false, and dangerous. His theories are all plausible; and all are enforced with matchless eloquence of style, but not with eloquence of thought or true feeling, like the soaring flights of Pascal, — in every respect his superior in genius, because more profound and lofty. Rousseau's writings, like his life, are one vast contradiction, the blending of truth with error, — the truth valuable even when commonplace, the error subtle and dangerous, — so that his general influence must be considered bad wherever man is weak or credulous or inexperienced or perverse. I wish I

could speak better of a man whom so many honestly admire, and whose influence has been so marked during the last hundred years, and will be equally great for a hundred years to come; a man from whom Madame de Staël, Jefferson, and Lamartine drew so much of their inspiration, whose ideas about childhood have so helpfully transformed the educational methods of our own time. But I must speak my honest conviction, from the light I have, at the same time hoping that fuller light may justify more leniency to one of the great oracles whose doctrines are still cherished by many of the guides of modern thought.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

1771–1832.

THE MODERN NOVEL.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE MODERN NOVEL.

IN the early decades of the nineteenth century the two most prominent figures in English literature were Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. They are still read and admired, especially Scott; but it is not easy to understand the enormous popularity of these two men in their own day. Their busts or pictures were in every cultivated family and in almost every shop-window. Everybody was familiar with the lineaments of their countenances, and even with every peculiarity of their dress. Who did not know the shape of the Byronic collar and the rough, plaided form of "the Wizard of the North"? Who could not repeat the most famous passages in the writings of these two authors?

Is it so now? If not, what a commentary might be written on human fame! How transitory are the judgments of men in regard to every one whom fashion stamps! The verdict of critics is that only

some half-dozen authors are now read with the interest and glow which their works called out a hundred years ago. Even the novels of Sir Walter, although to be found in every library, kindle but little enthusiasm compared with that excited by the masterpieces of Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, and of the favorites of the passing day. Why is this? Will these later lights also cease to burn? Will they too pass away? Is this age so much advanced that what pleased our grandfathers and grandmothers has no charm for us, but is often "flat, stale, and unprofitable," — at least, decidedly uninteresting?

I am inclined to the opinion that only a very small part of any man's writings is really immortal. Take out the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and how much is left of Gray for other generations to admire? And so of Goldsmith: besides the "Vicar of Wakefield" and the "Deserted Village," there is little in his writings that is likely to prove immortal. Johnson wrote but little poetry that is now generally valued. Certainly his dictionary, his greatest work, is not immortal, and is scarcely a standard. Indeed, we have outgrown nearly everything which was prized so highly a century ago, not only in poetry and fiction, but in philosophy, theology, and science. Perhaps that is least permanent which once was regarded as most certain.

If, then, the poetry and novels of Sir Walter Scott are not so much read or admired as they once were, we only say that he is no exception to the rule. I have in mind but two authors in the whole range of English literature that are read and prized as much to-day as they were two hundred years ago. And if this is true, what shall we say of rhetoricians like Macaulay, of critics like Carlyle, of theologians like Jonathan Edwards, of historians like Hume and Guizot, and of many other great men of whom it has been the fashion to say that their works are lasting as the language in which they were written? Some few books will doubtless live, but, alas, how few! Where now are the eight hundred thousand in the Alexandrian library, which Ptolemy collected with so great care, — what, even, their titles? Where are the writings of Varro, said to have been the most learned man of all antiquity?

I make these introductory remarks to show how shallow is the criticism passed upon a novelist or poet like Scott, in that he is not now so popular or so much read as he was in his own day. It is the fate of most great writers, — the Augustines, the Voltaires, the Bayles of the world. It is enough to say that they were lauded and valued in their time, since this is about all we can say of most of the works supposed to be immortal. But when we remember the enthu-

siasm with which the novels of Scott were at first received, the great sums of money which were paid for them, and the honors he received from them, he may well claim a renown and a popularity such as no other literary man ever enjoyed. His eyes beheld the glory of a great name; his ears rang with the plaudits of idolaters; he had the consciousness of doing good work, universally acknowledged and gratefully remembered. Scarcely any other novelist ever created so much healthy pleasure combined with so much sound instruction. And, further, he left behind him a reproachless name, having fewer personal defects than any literary man of his time, being everywhere beloved, esteemed, and almost worshipped; whom distant travellers came to see, — sure of kind and gracious treatment; a hero in their eyes to the last, with no drawbacks such as marred the fame of Byron or of Burns. That so great a genius as Scott is fading in the minds of this generation may be not without comfort to those honest and hard-working men in every walk of human life who can say: We too were useful in our day, and had our share of honors and rewards, — all perhaps that we deserved, or even more. What if we are forgotten, as most men are destined to be? To live in the mouths of men is not the greatest thing or the best. "Act well your part, there all the honor lies," for

life after all is a drama or a stage. The supremest happiness is not in being praised; it is in the consciousness of doing right and being possessed with the power of goodness.

When, however, a man has been seated on such a lofty pinnacle as was Sir Walter Scott, we wish to know something of his personal traits, and the steps by which he advanced to fame. Was he overrated, as most famous men have been? What is the niche he will probably occupy in the temple of literary fame? What are the characteristics of his productions? What gave him his prodigious and extraordinary popularity? Was he a born genius, like Byron and Burns, or was he merely a most industrious worker, aided by fortunate circumstances and the caprices of fashion? What were the intellectual forces of his day, and how did he come to be counted among them?

All these points it is difficult to answer satisfactorily, but some light may be shed upon them. The bulky volumes of Lockhart's Biography constitute a mine of information about Scott, but are now heavy reading, without much vivacity, — affording a strong contrast to Boswell's Life of Johnson, which concealed nothing that we would like to know. A son-in-law is not likely to be a dispassionate biographer, especially when family pride and interests

restrain him. On the other hand, it is not wise for a biographer to be too candid, and belittle his hero by the enumeration of foibles not consistent with the general tenor of the man's life. Lockhart's knowledge of his subject and his literary skill have given us much; and, with Scott's own letters and the critical notice of his contemporaries, both the man and his works may be fairly estimated.

Most biographers aim to make the birth and parentage of their heroes as respectable as possible. Of authors who are "nobly born" there are very few; most English and Scotch literary men are descended from ancestors of the middle class, — lawyers, clergymen, physicians, small landed proprietors, merchants, and so on, — who were able to give their sons an education in the universities. Sir Walter Scott traced his descent to an ancient Scottish chief. His grandfather, Robert Scott, was bred to the sea, but, being shipwrecked near Dundee, he became a farmer, and was active in the cattle-trade. Scott's father was a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, — what would be called in England a solicitor, — a thriving, respectable man, having a large and lucrative legal practice, and being highly esteemed for his industry and integrity; a zealous Presbyterian, formal and precise in manner, strict in the observance of the Sabbath, and of all that he

considered to be right. His wife, Anne Rutherford, was the daughter of a professor of medicine in the University of Edinburgh,—a lady of rather better education than the average of her time; a mother whom Sir Walter remembered with great tenderness, and to whose ample memory and power of graphic description he owed much of his own skill in reproducing the past. Twelve children were the offspring of this marriage, although only five survived very early youth.

Walter, the ninth child, was born on the 15th of August, 1771, and when quite young, in consequence of a fever, lost for a time the use of his right leg. By the advice of his grandfather, Dr. Rutherford, he was sent into the country for his health. As his lameness continued, he was, at the age of four, removed to Bath, going to London by sea. Bath was then a noted resort, and its waters were supposed to cure everything. Here little Walter remained a year under the care of his aunt, when he returned to Edinburgh, to his father's house in George Square, which was his residence until his marriage, with occasional visits to the county seat of his maternal grandfather. He completely regained his health, although he was always lame.

From the autobiography which Scott began but did not complete, it would appear that his lame-

ness and solitary habits were favorable to reading; that even as a child he was greatly excited by tales and poems of adventure; and that as a youth he devoured everything he could find pertaining to early Scottish poetry and romance, of which he was passionately fond. He was also peculiarly susceptible to the beauties of Scottish scenery, being thus led to enjoy the country and its sports at a much earlier age than is common with boys, — which love was never lost, but grew with his advancing years. Among his fellows he was a hearty player, a forward fighter in boyish "bickers," and a teller of tales that delighted his comrades. He was sweet-tempered, merry, generous, and well-beloved, yet peremptory and pertinacious in pursuit of his own ideas.

In 1779, Walter was sent to the High School in Edinburgh; but his progress here was by no means remarkable, although he laid a good foundation for the acquisition of the Latin language. He also had a tutor at home, and from him learned the rudiments of French. With a head all on fire for chivalry and Scottish ballads, he admired the old Tory cavaliers and hated the Roundheads and Presbyterians. In three years he had become fairly familiar with Cæsar, Livy, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, and Terence. He also distinguished himself by making Latin verses. From the High School he entered the University of Edinburgh,

very well grounded in French and Latin. For Greek and mathematics he had an aversion, but made up for this deficiency by considerable acquisitions in English literature. He was delighted with both Ossian and Spenser, and could repeat the "Faërie Queene" by heart. His memory, like that of Macaulay, was remarkable. What delighted him more than Spenser were Hoole's translations of Tasso and Ariosto (later he learned Italian, and read these in the original), and Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry." At college he also read the best novels of the day, especially the works of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. He made respectable progress in philosophy under the teaching of the celebrated Dugald Stewart and Professor Bruce, and in history under Lord Woodhouselee. On the whole, he was not a remarkable boy, except for his notable memory (which, however, kept only what pleased him), and his very decided bent toward the poetic and chivalric in history, life, and literature.

Walter was trained by his father to the law, and on leaving college he served the ordinary apprenticeship of five years in his father's office and attendance upon the law classes in the University; but the drudgery of the law was irksome to him. When the time came to select his profession, as a Writer to the Signet or an advocate, he preferred the latter; although success here was more uncertain than as a solicitor. Up to the time

of his admission to the bar he had read an enormous number of books, in a desultory way, and made many friends, some of whom afterwards became distinguished. His greatest pleasures were in long walks in the country with chosen companions. His love of Nature amounted to a passion, and in his long rambles he acquired not only vigorous health, but the capacity of undergoing great fatigue.

Scott's autobiography closes with his admission to the bar. From his own account his early career had not been particularly promising, although he was neither idle nor immoral. He was fond of convivial pleasures, but ever had uncommon self-control. All his instructors were gentlemanly, and he had access to the best society in Edinburgh, when that city was noted for its number of distinguished men in literature and in the different professions. His most intimate friends were John Irving, Sir Archibald Campbell, the Earl of Dalhousie, and Adam Ferguson, with whom he made excursions to the Highlands, and to ruined castles and abbeys of historic interest, — following with tireless search the new trail of an old Border ballad, or taking a thirty-mile walk to clear up some local legend of battle, foray, or historic event. In all these antiquarian raids the young fellows mingled freely with the people, and tramped the counties round about in most hilarious mood, by no means

escaping the habits of the day in tavern sprees and drinking-bouts, — although Scott's companions testify to his temperate indulgence.

The young lawyer was, indeed, unwittingly preparing for his mission to paint Scottish scenery so vividly, and Scottish character so charmingly, that he may almost be said to have created a new country which succeeding generations delight to visit. No man was ever a greater benefactor to Scotland, whose glories and beauties he was the first to reveal, showing how the most thrifty, practical, and parsimonious people may be at the same time the most poetic. Here Burns and he go hand in hand, although as a poet Scott declared that he was not to be named in the same day with the most unfortunate man of genius that his country and his century produced. How singular that in all worldly matters the greater genius should have been a failure, while he, who as a born poet was the lesser light, should have been the greatest popular success of which Scotland can boast! And yet there is something almost as pathetic and tragical in the career of the man who worked himself to death, as in that of the man who drank himself to death. The most supremely fortunate writer of his day came to a mournful end, notwithstanding his unparalleled honors and his magnificent rewards.

At the time Scott was admitted to the bar he was

not, of course, aware of his great original creative powers, nor could he have had very sanguine expectations of a brilliant career. The profession he had chosen was not congenial with his habits or his genius, and hence as a lawyer he was not a success. And yet he was not a failure, for he had the respect of some of the finest minds in Edinburgh, and at once gained as an advocate enough to support himself respectably among aristocratic people, — aided no doubt by his father who, as a prosperous Writer to the Signet, threw business into his hands. Amid his practice at the courts he found time to visit some of the most interesting spots in Scotland, and he had money enough to gratify his tastes. He was a thriving rather than a prosperous lawyer; that is to say, he earned his living.

But Scott was too much absorbed in literary studies and in writing ballads, to give to his numerous friends the hope of a distinguished legal career. No man can serve two masters. "His heart" was "in the Highlands a-chasing the deer," or ransacking distant villages for antiquarian lore, or collecting ancient Scottish minstrelsy, or visiting moss-covered and ivy-clad ruins, famous before John Knox swept monasteries and nunneries away as cages of unclean birds; but most of all was he interested in the feuds between the Lowland and Highland chieftains, and in the contest between Roundheads and Cavaliers when

Scotland lost her political independence. He did, however, find much in Scotch law to enrich his mind, with entanglements and antiquarian records, as well as the humors and tragedies of the courts; and of this his writings show many traces.

No young lawyer ever had more efficient friends than Walter Scott. And richly he deserved them, for he was generous, companionable, loyal, a brilliant story-teller, a good hunter and sportsman, bright, cheerful, and witty, doubtless one of the most interesting young men in his beautiful city; modest, too, and unpretentious, yet proud, claiming nothing that nothing might be denied him, a favorite in the most select circles. His most striking peculiarity was his good sense, keeping him from all exaggerations, which were always offensive to him. He was a Tory, indeed; but no aristocrat ever had a more genial humanity, taking pleasure in any society where he could learn anything. His appetite was so healthy, from his rural sports and pedestrian feats, that he could dine equally well on a broiled haddock or a saddle of venison, although from the minuteness of his descriptions of Scottish banquets one might infer that he had great appreciation of the pleasures of the table.

It is not easy to tell when Scott began to write poetry, but probably when he was quite young. He wrote for the pleasure of it, without any idea of devot-

ing his life to literature. Writing ballads was the solace of his leisure hours. His acquaintance with Francis, Lord Jeffrey began in 1791, at a club, where he read an essay on ballads which so much interested the future critic that he sought an introduction to its author, and the acquaintance thus begun between these two young men, both of whom unconsciously stood on the threshold of great careers, ripened into friendship. This happened before Scott was called to the bar in 1792. It was two years afterwards that he produced a poem which took by surprise a literary friend, Miss Cranstoun, and caused her to exclaim, "Upon my word, Walter Scott is going to turn out a poet, something of a cross between Burns and Gray!"

In 1795 Scott was appointed one of the Curators of the Advocates' Library,—a compliment bestowed only on those members of the bar known to have a zeal in literary affairs; but I do not read that he published anything until 1796, when appeared his translation from the German of Bürger's ballads, "The Wild Huntsman" and "Lenore." This called out high commendation from Dugald Stewart, the famous professor of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and from other men of note, but obtained no recognition in England.

It was during one of his rambles with his friend Ferguson to the English Lakes in 1797 that Scott met

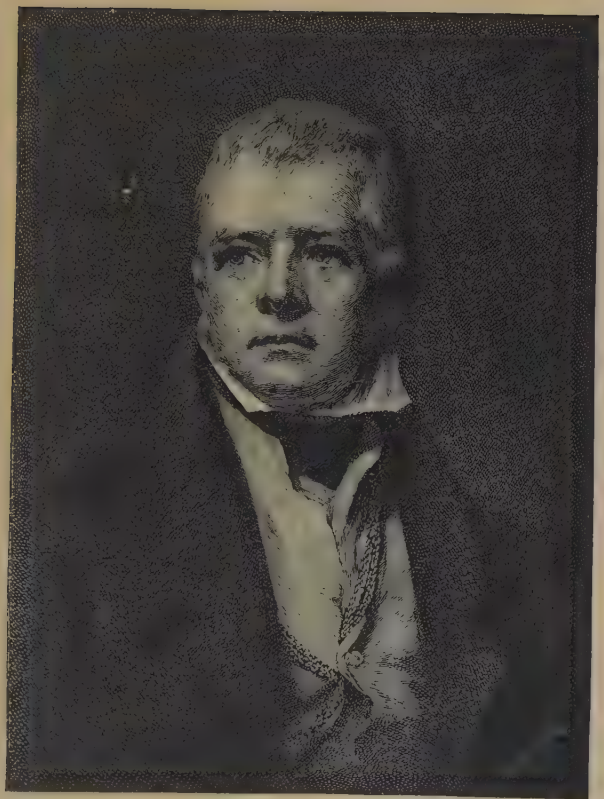
Miss Charlotte Margaret Carpenter, or Charpentier, a young French lady of notable beauty and lovely character. She had an income of about £200 a year, which, added to his earnings as an advocate, then about £150, encouraged him to offer to her his hand. For a young couple just starting in life £350 was an independence. The engagement met with no opposition from the lady's family; and in December of 1797 Scott was married, and took a modest house in Castle Street, being then twenty-six years of age. The marriage turned out to be a happy one, although *convenance* had something to do with it.

Of course, so healthy and romantic a nature as Scott's had not passed through the susceptible time of youth without a love affair. From so small a circumstance as the lending of his umbrella to a young lady (Margaret, the beautiful daughter of Sir John Belches) he enjoyed five years of affection and of what seems to have been a reasonable hope, which, however, was finally ended by the young lady's marrying Mr. William Forbes, a well-to-do banker, and later one of Scott's best friends. "Three years of dreaming and two years of waking," Scott calls it in one of his diaries, thirty years later; and his own marriage followed within a year after that of his lost love.

With an income sufficient only for the necessities of life, as a married man in society Scott had not much

to spare for expensive dinners, although given to hospitality. What money he could save was spent for books and travel. At twenty-six, he had visited what was most interesting in Scotland, either in scenery or historical associations, and some parts of England, especially the Cumberland Lakes. He took a cottage at Lasswade, near Edinburgh, and began there the fascinating pursuit of tree-planting and "place"-making. His vacations when the Courts were not in session were spent in excursions to mountain scenery and those retired villages where he could pick up antiquarian lore, particularly old Border ballads, heroic traditions of the times of chivalry, and of the conflicts of Scottish chieftains. Concerning these no man in Scotland knew so much as he, his knowledge furnishing the foundation alike of his lays and his romances. His enthusiasm for these scenic and historic interests was unquenchable, — a source of perpetual enjoyment, which made him a most acceptable visitor wherever he chose to go, both among antiquaries and literary men, and ladies of rank and fashion.

In March, 1799, Mr. and Mrs. Scott visited London, where they were introduced to many distinguished literary men. On their return to Edinburgh, the office of sheriff depute of Selkirkshire having become vacant, worth £300 a year, Scott received the appointment, which increased his income to about



After the painting by Sir Henry Raeburn, R. A.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

£700. Although his labors were light, the office entailed the necessity of living in that county a few months in each year. It was a pastoral, quiet, peaceful part of the country, belonging to the Duke of Buccleuch, his friend and patron. His published translation in this year of Goethe's "Goetz of Berlichingen" added to his growing reputation, and led him on towards his career.

With a secure and settled income, Scott now meditated a literary life. A hundred years ago such a life was impossible without independent means, if a man would mingle in society and live conventionally, and what was called respectably. Even Burns had to accept a public office, although it was a humble one, and far from lucrative; but it gave him what poetry could not, — his daily bread. Hogg, peasant-poet of the Ettrick forest, was supported in all his earlier years by tending sheep and borrowing money from his friends.

The first genuine literary adventure of Scott was his collection of a "Scottish Minstrelsy," printed for him by James Ballantyne, a former schoolfellow, who had been encouraged by Scott to open a shop in Edinburgh. The preparation of this labor of love occupied the editor a year, assisted by John Leyden, a man of great promise, who died in India in 1811, having made a mark as an Orientalist. About this time began

Scott's memorable friendship with George Ellis, the most discriminating and useful of all his literary friends. In the same year he made the acquaintance of Thomas Campbell, the poet, who had already achieved fame by his "Pleasures of Hope."

It was in 1802 that the first and second volumes of the "Minstrelsy" appeared, in an edition of eight hundred copies, Scott's share of the profits amounting to £78 10*s.*, which did not pay him for the actual expenditure in the collection of his materials. The historical notes with which he elucidated the value of the ancient ballads, and the freshness and vigor of those which he himself wrote for the collection, secured warm commendations from Ellis, Ritson, and other friends, and the whole edition was sold; yet the work did not bring him wide fame. The third and last volume was issued in 1803.

The work is full of Scott's best characteristics, — wide historical knowledge, wonderful industry, humor, pathos, and a sympathetic understanding of life — that of the peasant as well as the knight — such as seizes the imagination. Lockhart quotes a passage of Scott's own self-criticism: "I am sensible that if there be anything good about my poetry, or prose either, it is *a hurried frankness of composition*, which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active dispositions." His ability to "toil terribly" in accum-

ulating choice material, and then, fusing it in his own spirit, to throw it forth among men with this "hurried frankness" that stirs the blood, was the secret of his power.

Scott did not become famous, however, until his first original poem appeared, — "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," printed by Ballantyne in 1805, and published by Longman of London, and Constable of Edinburgh. It was a great success ; nearly fifty thousand copies were sold in Great Britain alone by 1830. For the first edition of seven hundred and fifty copies quarto, Scott received £169 6*s.*, and then sold the copyright for £500.

In the meantime, a rich uncle died without children, and Scott's share of the property enabled him, in 1804, to rent from his cousin, Major-General Sir James Russell, the pretty property called Ashestiel, — a cottage and farm on the banks of the Tweed, altogether a beautiful place, where he lived when discharging his duties of sheriff of Selkirkshire. He has celebrated the charms of Ashestiel in the canto introduction to "Marmion." His income at this time amounted to about £1000 a year, which gave him a position among the squires of the neighborbood, complete independence, and leisure to cultivate his taste. His fortune was now made: with poetic fame besides, and powerful friends, he was a man every way to be envied.

"The Lay of the Last Minstrel" placed Scott among the three great poets of Scotland, for originality and beauty of rhyme. It is not marked by pathos or by philosophical reflections. It is a purely descriptive poem of great vivacity and vividness, easy to read, and true to nature. It is a tale of chivalry, and is to poetry what Froissart's "Chronicles" are to history. Nothing exactly like it had before appeared in English literature. It appealed to all people of romantic tastes, and was reproachless from a moral point of view. It was a book for a lady's bower, full of chivalric sentiments and stirring incidents, and of unflagging interest from beginning to end, — partly warlike and partly monastic, describing the adventures of knights and monks. It deals with wizards, harpers, dwarfs, priests, warriors, and noble dames. It sings of love and wassailings, of gentle ladies' tears, of castles and festal halls, of pennons and lances, —

> "Of ancient deeds, so long forgot,
> Of feuds whose memory was not,
> Of forests now laid waste and bare,
> Of towers which harbor now the hare."

In "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" there is at least one immortal stanza which would redeem the poem even if otherwise mediocre. How few poets can claim as much as this! Very few poems live except for some splendid passages which cannot be forgotten,

and which give fame. I know of nothing, even in Burns, finer than the following lines: —

> "Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land!
> Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
> As home his footsteps he hath turned
> From wandering on a foreign strand?
> If such there breathe, go, mark him well!
> For him no minstrel raptures swell;
> High though his titles, proud his name,
> Boundless his wealth as wish can claim, —
> Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
> The wretch, concentred all in self,
> Living shall forfeit fair renown,
> And, doubly dying, shall go down
> To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
> Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

The favor with which "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was received, greater than that of any narrative poem of equal length which had appeared for two generations, even since Dryden's day, naturally brought great commendation from Jeffrey, the keenest critic of the age, in the famous magazine of which he was the editor. The Edinburgh Review had been started only in 1802 by three young men of genius, — Jeffrey, Brougham, and Sydney Smith, — and had already attained great popularity, but not such marvellous influence as it wielded ten years afterwards, when nine

thousand copies were published every three months, and at such a price as gave to its contributors a splendid remuneration, and to its editors absolute critical independence. The only objection to this powerful periodical was the severity of its criticisms, which often also were unjust. It seemed to be the intent of the reviewers to demolish everything that was not of extraordinary merit. Fierce attacks are not criticism. The articles in the Edinburgh Review were of a different sort from the polished and candid literary dissections which made Ste.-Beuve so justly celebrated. In the beginning of the century, however, these savage attacks were all the fashion and to be expected; yet they stung authors almost to madness, as in the case of the review of Byron's early poetry. Literary courtesy did not exist. Justice gave place generally to ridicule or sarcasm. The Edinburgh Review was a terror to all pretenders, and often to men of real merit. But it was published when most judges were cruel and severe, even in the halls of justice.

The friendship between Scott and Jeffrey had been very close for ten years before the inception of the Edinburgh Review; and although Scott was (perhaps growing out of his love for antiquarian researches and admiration of the things that had been) an inveterate conservative and Tory, while the new Review was slashingly liberal and progressive, he was drawn in

by friendship and literary interest to be a frequent contributor during its first three or four years. The politics of the Edinburgh Review, however, and the establishment in 1808 of the conservative Quarterly Review, caused a gradual cessation of this literary connection, without marring the friendly relations between the two men.

About this time began Scott's friendship with Wordsworth, for whom he had great respect. Indeed, his modesty led him to prefer everybody's good poetry to his own. He felt himself inferior not only to Burns, but also to Wordsworth and Campbell and Coleridge and Byron,—as in many respects he undoubtedly was; but it requires in an author discernment and humility of a rare kind, to make him capable of such a discrimination.

More important to him than any literary friendship was his partnership with James Ballantyne, the printer, whom he had known from his youth. This in the end proved unfortunate, and nearly ruined him; for Ballantyne, though an accomplished man and a fine printer, as well as enterprising and sensible, was not a safe business man, being over-sanguine. For a time, however, this partnership, which was kept secret, was an advantage to both parties, although Scott embarked in the enterprise his whole available capital, about £5000. In connection with the publishing

business, soon added to the printing, with James Ballantyne's brother John as figure-head of the concern, — a talented but dissipated and reckless "good fellow," with no more head for business than either James Ballantyne or Scott, — the association bound Scott hand and foot for twenty years, and prompted him to adventurous undertakings. But it must be said that the Ballantynes always deferred to him, having for him a sentiment little short of veneration. One of the first results of this partnership was an eighteen-volume edition of Dryden's poems, with a Life, which must have been to Scott little more than drudgery. He was well paid for his work, although it added but little to his fame, except for intelligent literary industry.

Before the Dryden, however, in the same year, 1808, appeared the poem of "Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field," which was received by the public with great avidity, and unbounded delight. Jeffrey wrote a chilling review, for which Scott with difficulty forgave him, since with all his humility and amiability he could not bear unfriendly or severe criticism.

In a letter to Joanna Baillie, Scott makes some very sensible remarks as to the incapability of such a man as Jeffrey appreciating a work of the imagination, distinguished as he was: —

"I really have often told him that I think he wants the taste for poetry which is essentially necessary to enjoy, and of course to criticize with justice. He is learned with the most learned in its canons and laws, skilled in its modulations, and an excellent judge of the justice of the sentiments which it conveys; but he wants that enthusiastic feeling which, like sunshine upon a landscape, lights up every beauty, and palliates if it cannot hide every defect. To offer a poem of imagination to a man whose whole life and study have been to acquire a stoical indifference towards enthusiasm of every kind, would be the last, as it would surely be the silliest, action of my life."

As stated above, it was about this time that Scott broke off his connection with the Edinburgh Review. Perhaps that was what Jeffrey wished, since the Review became thenceforth more intensely partisan, and Scott's Toryism was not what was wanted.

It is fair to add that in 1810 Jeffrey sent Scott advance proofs of his critique on "The Lady of the Lake," with a frank and friendly letter in which he says:—

"I am now sensible that there were needless asperities in my review of 'Marmion,' and from the hurry in which I have been forced to write, I dare say there may be some here also. . . . I am sincerely proud both of your genius and of your glory, and I value your friendship more highly than most either of my literary or political opinions."

Southey, Ellis, and Wordsworth, Erskine, Heber, and other friends wrote congratulatory letters about "Marmion," with slight allusions to minor blemishes. Lockhart thought that it was on the whole the greatest of Scott's poems, in strength and boldness. Most critics regarded the long introduction to each canto as a defect, since it broke the continuity of the narrative; but it may at least be said that these preludes give an interesting insight into the author's moods and views. The opinions of literary men of course differ as to the relative excellence of the different poems. "Marmion" certainly had great merit, and added to the fame of the author. There is here more variety of metre than in his other poems, and also some passages of such beauty as to make the poem immortal, — like the death of Marmion, and those familiar lines in reference to Clara's constancy: —

> "O woman! in our hours of ease,
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
> And variable as the shade
> By the light, quivering aspen made, —
> When pain and anguish wring the brow,
> A ministering angel thou."

The sale of "Marmion" ultimately reached fifty thousand copies in Great Britain. The poem was originally published in a luxurious quarto at thirty-one and a-half shillings. Besides one thousand

guineas in advance, half the profits went to Scott, and must have reached several thousand pounds, — a great sale, when we remember that it was confined to libraries and people of wealth. In America, the poem was sold for two or three shillings, — less than one-tenth of what it cost the English reader. A successful poem or novel in England is more remunerative to the author, from the high price at which it is published, than in the United States, where prices are lower and royalties rarely exceed ten per cent. It must be borne in mind, however, that in England editions are ordinarily very small, sometimes consisting of not more than two hundred and fifty copies. The first edition of "Marmion" was only of two thousand copies. The largest edition published was in 1811, of five thousand copies octavo; but even this did not circulate largely among the people. The popularity of Scott in England was confined chiefly to the upper classes, at least until the copyright of his books had expired. The booksellers were not slow in availing themselves of Scott's popularity. They employed him to edit an edition of Swift for £1500, and tried to induce him to edit a general edition of English poets. That scheme was abandoned in consequence of a disagreement between Scott and Murray, the London publisher, as to the selection of poets.

I think the quarrels of authors eighty or one hundred years ago with their publishers were more frequent than they are in these times. We read of a long alienation between Scott and Constable, the publisher, who enjoyed a sort of monopoly of the poet's contributions to literature. Constable soon after found a great rival in Murray, who was at this time an obscure London bookseller in Fleet Street. Both these great publishers were remarkable for sagacity, and were bold in their ventures. The foundation of Constable's wealth was laid when he was publishing the Edinburgh Review. In 1809, Murray started the Quarterly Review, its great political rival, with the aid of Scott, who wrote many of its most valuable articles; and William Gifford, satirist and critic, became its first editor. Growing out of the quarrel between Scott and Constable was the establishment of John Ballantyne & Co. as publishers and booksellers in Edinburgh.

Shortly after the establishment of the Quarterly Review as a Tory journal, Scott began his third great poem, "The Lady of the Lake," which was published in 1810, in all the majesty of a quarto, at the price of two guineas a copy. He received for it two thousand guineas. The first edition of two thousand copies disappeared at once, and was followed the same year by four octavo editions. In a few months the sale reached

twenty thousand copies. The poem received great commendation both from the Quarterly and the Edinburgh Review.

Mr. Ellis, in his article in the Quarterly, thus wrote:

"There is nothing in Scott of the severe majesty of Milton, or of the terse composition of Pope, or the elaborate elegance of Campbell, or the flowing and redundant diction of Southey; but there is a medley of bright images, and a diction tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakespeare, the antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar ballads, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry, — passing from the borders of the ludicrous to the sublime, alternately minute and energetic, sometimes artificial, and frequently negligent, but always full of spirit and vivacity, abounding in images that are striking at first sight to minds of every contexture, and never expressing a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend."

This seems to me to be a fair criticism, although the lucidity of Scott's poetry is not that which is most admired by modern critics. Fashion in these times delights in what is obscure and difficult to be understood, as if depth and profundity must necessarily be unintelligible to ordinary readers. In Scott's time, however, the fashion was different, and the popularity of his poems became almost universal. However, there are the same fire, vivacity, and brilliant color-

ing in all three of these masterpieces, as they were regarded two generations ago, reminding one of the witchery of Ariosto; yet there is no great variety in these poems such as we find in Byron, no great force of passion or depth of sentiment, but a sort of harmonious rhythm, — more highly prized in the earlier part of the century than in the latter, since Wordsworth and Tennyson have made us familiar with what is deeper and richer, as well as more artistic, in language and versification. But no one has denied Scott's originality and high merits, in contrast with the pompous tameness and conventionality of the poetry which arose when Johnson was the oracle of literary circles, and which still held the stage in Scott's day.

Even Scott's admirers, however, like Canning and Ellis, did not hesitate to say that they would like something different from anything he had already written. But this was not to be; and perhaps the reason why he soon after gave up writing poetry was the conviction that his genius as a poet did not lie in variety and richness, either of style or matter. His great fame was earned by his novels.

One thing greatly surprises me: Scott regarded Joanna Baillie as the greatest poetical genius of that day, and he derived more pleasure from reading Johnson's "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" than from any other poetical composition. Indeed,

there is nothing more remarkable in literary history than Scott's admiration of poetry inferior to his own, and his extraordinary modesty in the estimate of his own productions. Most poets are known for their morbid vanity, their self-consciousness, their feeling of superiority, and their depreciation of superior excellence; but Scott had eminently a healthy mind, as he had a healthy body, and shrank from exaggeration as he did from vulgarity in all its forms. It is probable that his own estimate of his poetry was nearer the truth than that of his admirers, who were naturally inclined to be partial.

There has been so much poetry written since "The Lady of the Lake" was published, — not only by celebrated poets like Wordsworth, Southey, Moore, Byron, Campbell, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Browning, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Bryant, but also by many minor authors, — that the standard is now much higher than it was in the early part of the century. Much of that which then was regarded as very fine is now smiled at by the critics, and neglected by cultivated readers generally; and Scott has not escaped unfavorable criticism.

It has been my object to present the subject of this Lecture historically rather than critically, — to show the extraordinary popularity of Scott as a poet among his contemporaries, rather than to estimate his merit

at the present time. I confess that most of "Marmion," as also of the "Lady of the Lake," is tame to me, and deficient in high poetic genius. Doubtless we are all influenced by the standards of our own time, and the advances making in literature as well as in science and art. Yet this change in the opinions of critics does not apply to Byron's "Childe Harold," which is as much, if not as widely, admired now as when it was first published. We think as highly too of "The Deserted Village," the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and the "Cotter's Saturday Night," as our fathers did. And men now think much more highly of the merits of Shakspeare than they have at any period since he lived; so that after all there is an element in true poetry which does not lose by time. In another hundred years, the verdicts of critics as to the greater part of the poems of Tennyson, Wordsworth, Browning, and Longfellow, may be very different from what they now are, while some of their lyrics may be, as they are now, pronounced immortal.

Poetry is both an inspiration and an art. The greater part of that which is now produced is made, not born. Those daintily musical and elaborate measures which are now the fashion, because they claim novelty, or reproduce the quaintness of an art so old as to be practically new, perhaps will soon again be forgotten or derided. What is simple, natural, appeal-

ing to the heart rather than to the head, may last when more pretentious poetry shall have passed away. Neither criticism nor contemporary popularity can decide such questions.

Scott himself seemed to take a true view. In a letter to Miss Seward, he said: —

"The immortality of poetry is not so firm a point in my creed as the immortality of the soul.

'I've lived too long,
And seen the death of much immortal song.'

Nay, those that have really attained their literary immortality have gained it under very hard conditions. To some it has not attached till after death. To others it has been the means of lauding personal vices and follies which had otherwise been unremembered in their epitaphs; and all enjoy the same immortality under a condition similar to that of Noureddin in an Eastern tale. Noureddin, you remember, was to enjoy the gift of immortality, but with this qualification, — that he was subjected to long naps of forty, fifty, or a hundred years at a time. Even so Homer and Virgil slumbered through whole centuries. Shakspeare himself enjoyed undisturbed sleep from the age of Charles I., until Garrick waked him. Dryden's fame has nodded; that of Pope begins to be drowsy; Chaucer is as sound as a top, and Spenser is snoring in the midst of his commentators. Milton, indeed, is quite awake; but, observe, he was at his very outset refreshed with a nap of half-a-century; and in the midst of all this we sons of degeneracy talk

of immortality! Let me please my own generation, and let those who come after us judge of their facts and my performances as they please; the anticipation of their neglect or censure will affect me very little."

In 1812 the poet-lawyer was rewarded with the salary of a place whose duties he had for some years performed without pay, — that of Clerk of Sessions, worth £800 per annum. Thus having now about £1500 as an income, independently of his earnings by the pen, Scott gave up his practice as an advocate, and devoted himself entirely to literature. At the same time he bought a farm of somewhat more than a hundred acres on the banks of the beautiful Tweed, about five miles from Ashestiel, and leaving to its owners the pretty place in which he had for six years enjoyed life and work, he removed to the cottage at Abbotsford, — for thus he named his new purchase, in memory of the abbots of Melrose, who formerly owned all the region, and the ruins of whose lovely abbey stood not far away. Of the £4000 for this purchase half was borrowed from his brother, and the other half on the pledge of the profits of a poem that was projected but not written, — "Rokeby."

Scott ought to have been content with Ashestiel; or, since every man wishes to own his home, he should have been satisfied with the comfortable cottage which he built at Abbotsford, and the modest improvements

that his love for trees and shrubs enabled him to make. But his aspirations led him into serious difficulties. With all his sagacity and good sense, Scott never seemed to know when he was well off. It was a fatal mistake both for his fame and happiness to attempt to compete with those who are called great in England and Scotland, — that is, peers and vast landed proprietors. He was not alone in this error, for it has generally been the ambition of fortunate authors to acquire social as well as literary distinction, — thus paying tribute to riches, and virtually abdicating their own true position, which is higher than any that rank or wealth can give. It has too frequently been the misfortune of literary genius to bow down to vulgar idols; and the worldly sentiments which this idolatry involves are seen in almost every fashionable novel which has appeared for a hundred years. In no country is this melancholy social slavery more usual than in England, with all its political freedom, although there are noble exceptions. The only great flaw in Scott's character was this homage to rank and wealth.

On the other hand, rank and wealth also paid homage to him as a man of genius; both Scotland and England received him into the most select circles, not only of their literary and political, but of their fashionable, life.

In 1811 Scott published "The Lord of the Isles," and in 1813, "Rokeby," neither of which was remarkable for either literary or commercial success, although both were well received. In 1814 he edited a nineteen-volume edition of Dean Swift's works, with a Life, and in the same year began — almost by accident — the real work of his own career, in "Waverley."

If public opinion is far different to-day from what it was in Scott's time in reference to his poetry, we observe the same change in regard to the source of his widest fame, his novels, — but not to so marked a degree, for it was in fiction that Scott's great gifts had their full fruition. Many a fine intellect still delights in his novels, though cultivated readers and critics differ as to their comparative merits. No two persons will unite in their opinions as to the three of those productions which they like most or least. It is so with all famous novels. Then, too, what man of seventy will agree with a man of thirty as to the comparative merits of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, George Eliot, Eugene Sue, Victor Hugo, Balzac, George Sand? How few read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," compared with the multitudes who read that most powerful and popular book forty years ago? How changing, if not transient, is the fame of the novelist as well as of the poet! With reference to him even the same generation changes its tastes.

What filled us with delight as young men or women of twenty, is at fifty spurned with contempt or thrown aside with indifference. No books ever filled my mind and soul with the delight I had when, at twelve years of age, I read "The Children of the Abbey" and "Thaddeus of Warsaw." What man of eighty can forget the enthusiasm with which he read "Old Mortality" or "Ivanhoe" when he was in college?

Perhaps one test of a great book is the pleasure derived from reading it over and over again, — as we read "Don Quixote," or the dramas of Shakspeare, of whose infinite variety we never tire. Measured by this test, the novels of Sir Walter Scott are among the foremost works of fiction which have appeared in our world. They will not all retain their popularity from generation to generation, like "Don Quixote" or "The Pilgrim's Progress" or "The Vicar of Wakefield;" but these are single productions of their authors, while not a few of Scott's many novels are certainly still read by cultivated people, — if not with the same interest they excited when first published, yet with profit and admiration. They have some excellencies which are immortal, — elevation of sentiment, chivalrous regard for women, fascination of narrative (after one has waded through the learned historical introductory chapters), the absence of exaggeration, the vast variety of characters introduced and

vividly maintained, and above all the freshness and originality of description, both of Nature and of man. Among the severest and most bigoted of New England Puritans, none could find anything corrupting or demoralizing in his romances; whereas Byron and Bulwer were never mentioned without a shudder, and even Shakspeare was locked up in book-cases as unfit for young people to read, and not particularly creditable for anybody to own. The unfavorable comments which the most orthodox ever made upon Scott were as to the repulsiveness of the old Covenanters, as he described them, and his sneers at Puritan perfections. Scott, however, had contempt, not for the Puritans, but for many of their peculiarities, — especially for their cant when it degenerated into hypocrisy.

One thing is certain, that no works of fiction have had such universal popularity both in England and America for so long a period as the Waverley Novels. Scott reigned as the undisputed monarch of the realm of fiction and romance for twenty-five years. He gave undiminished entertainment to an entire generation — and not that merely, but instruction — in his historical novels, although his views were not always correct, —as whose ever are? He who could charm millions of readers, learned and unlearned, for a quarter of a century must have possessed remarkable genius. Indeed, he was not only the central figure in

English literature for a generation, but he was regarded as peculiarly original. Another style of novels may obtain more passing favor with modern readers, but Scott was justly famous; his works are to-day in every library, and form a delightful part of the education of every youth and maiden who cares to read at all; and he will as a novelist probably live after some who are now prime favorites will be utterly forgotten or ignored.

About 1830 Bulwer was in his early successes; about 1840 Dickens was the rage of his day; about 1850 Thackeray had taken his high grade; and it was about 1860 that George Eliot's power appeared. These still retain their own peculiar lines of popularity, — Bulwer with the romantic few, Thackeray with the appreciative intelligent, George Eliot with a still wider clientage, and Dickens with everybody, on account of his appeal to the universal sentiments of comedy and pathos. Scott's influence, somewhat checked during the growth of these reputations and the succession of fertile and accomplished writers on both sides of the Atlantic, — including the introspective analysts of the past fifteen years, — has within a decade been rising again, and has lately burst forth in a new group of historical romancers who seem to have "harked back" from the subjective fad of our day to Scott's healthy, adventurous objectivity. Not only so, but new editions

of the Waverley Novels are coming one by one from the shrewd publishers who keep track of the popular taste, one of the most attractive being issued in Edinburgh at half-a-crown a volume.

The first of Scott's remarkable series of novels, "Waverley," published in 1814 when the author was forty-three years of age and at the height of his fame as a poet, took the fashionable and literary world by storm. The novel had been partly written for several years, but was laid aside, as his edition of Swift and his essays for the supplement of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and other prose writings, employed all the time he had to spare.

This hack-work was done by Scott without enthusiasm, to earn money for his investment in real estate, and is not of transcendent merit. Obscurer men than he had performed such literary drudgery with more ability, but no writer was ever more industrious. The amount of work which he accomplished at this period was prodigious, especially when we remember that his duties as sheriff and clerk of Sessions occupied eight months of the year. He was more familiar with the literary history of Queen Anne's reign than any subsequent historian, if we except Macaulay, whose brilliant career had not yet begun. He took, of course, a different view of Swift from the writers of the Edinburgh Review, and was probably too favorable in his

description of the personal character of the Dean of St. Patrick's, who is now generally regarded as "inordinately ambitious, arrogant, and selfish; of a morose, vindictive, and haughty temper, utterly destitute of generosity and magnanimity, as well as of tenderness, fidelity, and compassion." Lord Jeffrey, in his Review, attacked Swift's moral character with such consummate ability as to check materially the popularity of his writings, which are universally admitted to be full of genius. His superb intellect and his morality present a sad contrast, — as in the cases of Bacon, Burns, and Byron, — which Scott, on account of the force of his Tory prejudices, did not sufficiently point out.

But as to the novel, when it suddenly appeared, it is not surprising that "Waverley" should at once have attained an unexampled popularity when we consider the mediocrity of all works of fiction at that time, if we except the Irish tales of Maria Edgeworth. Scott received from Constable £1000 for this romance, then deemed a very liberal remuneration for what cost him but a few months' work. The second and third volumes were written in one month. He wrote with remarkable rapidity when his mind was full of the subject; and his previous studies as an antiquary and as a collector of Scottish poetry and legends fitted him for his work, which was in no sense a task, but a most lively pleasure.

It is not known why Scott published this strikingly original work anonymously; perhaps it was because of his unusual modesty, and the fear that he might lose the popularity he had already enjoyed as a poet. But it immediately placed him on a higher literary elevation, since it was generally suspected that he was the author. He could not altogether disguise himself from the keen eyes of Jeffrey and other critics.

The book was received as a revelation. The first volume is not particularly interesting, but the story continually increases in interest to its close. It is not a dissection of the human heart; it is not even much of a love-story, but a most vivid narrative, without startling situations or adventures. Its great charm is its quiet humor, — not strained into witty expressions which provoke laughter, but a sort of amiable delineation of the character of a born gentleman, with his weaknesses and prejudices, all leaning to virtue's side. It is a description of manners peculiar to the Scottish gentry in the middle of the eighteenth century, especially among the Jacobite families then passing away.

Of course the popularity of this novel, at that time, was chiefly confined to the upper classes. In the first place the people could not afford to pay the price of the book; and, secondly, it was outside their sympathies and knowledge. Indeed, I doubt if any common-

place person, without culture or extended knowledge, can enjoy so refined a work, with so many learned allusions, and such exquisite humor, which appeals to a knowledge of the world in its higher aspects. It is one of the last books that an ignorant young lady brought up on the trash of ordinary fiction would relish or comprehend. Whoever turns uninterested from "Waverley" is probably unable to see its excellencies or enjoy its peculiar charms. It is not a book for a modern school-boy or school-girl, but for a man or woman in the highest maturity of mind, with a poetic or imaginative nature, and with a leaning perhaps to aristocratic sentiments. It is a rebuke to vulgarity and ignorance, which the minute and exaggerated descriptions of low life in the pages of Dickens certainly are not.

In February, 1815, "Guy Mannering" was published, the second in the series of the Waverley Novels, and was received by the intelligent reading classes with even more *éclat* than "Waverley," to which it is superior in many respects. It plunges at once *in medias res*, without the long and labored introductory chapters of its predecessor. It is interesting from first to last, and is an elaborate and well-told tale, written *con amore*, when Scott was in the maturity of his powers. It is full of incident and is delightful in humor. Its chief excellence is in the

loftiness of its sentiments, — being one of the healthiest and wholesomest novels ever written, appealing to the heart as well as to the intellect, to be read over and over again, like "The Vicar of Wakefield," without weariness. It may be too aristocratic in its tone to please everybody, but it portrays the sentiments of its age in reference to squires and Scottish lairds, who were more distinguished for uprightness and manly duties than for brains and culture.

The fascination with which Scott always depicts the virtues of hospitality and trust in humanity makes a strong impression on the imagination. His heroes and heroines are not remarkable for genius, but shine in the higher glories of domestic affection and fidelity to trusts. Two characters in particular are original creations, — "Dominie Sampson" and "Meg Merrilies," whom no reader can forget, — the one, ludicrous for his simplicity; and the other a gypsy woman, weird and strange, more like a witch than a sibyl, but intensely human, and capable of the strongest attachment for those she loved.

"The easy and transparent flow of the style of this novel; its beautiful simplicity; the wild magnificence of its sketches of scenery; the rapid and ever brightening interest of the narrative; the unaffected kindness of feeling; the manly purity of thought, everywhere mingled with a gentle humor and homely sagacity, — but, above

all, the rich variety and skilful contrast of character and manners, at once fresh in fiction, and stamped with the unforgeable seal of truth and nature, spoke to every heart and mind; and the few murmurs of pedantic criticism were lost in the voice of general delight which never fails to welcome the invention that introduces to the sympathy of the imagination a new group of immortal realities."

Scott received about £2000 for this favorite romance, — one entirely new in the realm of fiction, — which enabled him to pay off his most pressing debts, and indulge his taste for travel. He visited the Field of Waterloo, and became a social lion in both Paris and London. The Prince of Wales sent him a magnificent snuff-box set with diamonds, and entertained him with admiring cordiality at Carlton House, — for his authorship of "Waverley" was more than surmised, while his fame as a poet was second only to that of Byron. Then (in the spring of 1815) took place the first meeting of these two great bards, and their successive interviews were graced with mutual compliments. Scott did not think that Byron's reading was extensive either in poetry or history, in which opinion the industrious Scottish bard was mistaken; but he did justice to Byron's transcendent genius, and with more charity than severity mourned over his departure from virtue. After a series of brilliant banquets at the

houses of the great, both of rank and of fame, Scott returned to his native land to renew his varied and exhausting labors, having furnished his publishers with a volume of letters on the subjects which most interested him during his short tour. Everything he touched now brought him gold.

"Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk," as he called this volume concerning his tour, was well received, but not with the enthusiasm which marked the publication of "Guy Mannering;" indeed, it had no special claim to distinction. "The Antiquary" followed in May of the next year, and though it lacked the romance of "Waverley" and the adventure of "Guy Mannering," it had even a larger sale. Scott himself regarded it as superior to both; but an author is not always the best judge of his own productions, and we do not accept his criticism. It probably cost him more labor; but it is an exhibition of his erudition rather than a revelation of himself or of Nature. It is certainly very learned; but learning does not make a book popular, nor is a work of fiction the place for a display of learning. If "The Antiquary" were published in these times, it would be pronounced pedantic. Readers are apt to skip names and learned allusions and scraps of Latin. As a story I think it inferior to "Guy Mannering," although it has great merits, — "a kind of simple, unsought charm," — and

is a transcript of actual Scottish life. It had a great success; Scott says in a letter to his friend Terry: "It is at press again, six thousand having been sold in six days." Before the novel was finished, the author had already projected his "Tales of My Landlord."

Scott was now at the flood-tide of his creative power, and his industry was as remarkable as his genius. There was but little doubt in the public mind as to the paternity of the Waverley Novels, and whatever Scott wrote was sure to have a large sale; so that every publisher of note was eager to have a hand in bringing his productions before the public. In 1816 appeared the "Edinburgh Annual Register," containing Scott's sketch of the year 1814, which, though very good, showed that the author was less happy in history than in fiction.

The first series of "Tales of My Landlord" was published by Murray, and not by Constable, who had brought out Scott's other works, and the book was received with unbounded enthusiasm. Many critics place "Old Mortality" in the highest niche of merit and fame. Frere of the Quarterly Review, Hallam, Boswell, Lamb, Lord Holland, all agreed that it surpassed his other novels. Bishop Heber said, "There are only two men in the world,— Walter Scott and Lord Byron." Lockhart regarded "Old Mortality"

as the "Marmion" of Scott's novels; but the painting of the Covenanters gave offence to the more rigid of the Presbyterians. For myself, I have doubt as to the correctness of their criticisms. "Old Mortality," in contrast with the previous novels of Scott, has a place similar to the later productions of George Eliot as compared with her earlier ones. It is not so vivid a sketch of Scotch life as is given in "Guy Mannering." Like "The Antiquary," it is bookish rather than natural. From a literary point of view, it is more artistic than "Guy Mannering," and more learned. "The canvas is a broader one." Its characters are portrayed with great skill and power, but they lack the freshness which comes from actual contact with the people described, and with whom Scott was familiar as a youth in the course of his wanderings. It is more historical than realistic. In short, "Old Mortality" is another creation of its author's brain rather than a painting of real life. But it is justly famous, for it was the precursor of those brilliant historical romances from which so much is learned of great men already known to students. It was a new departure in literature.

Before Scott arose, historical novels were comparatively unknown. He made romance instructive, rather than merely amusing, and added the charm of life to the dry annals of the past. Cervantes does not portray

a single great character known in Spanish history in his "Don Quixote," but he paints life as he has seen it. So does Goldsmith. So does George Eliot in "Silas Marner." She presents life, indeed, in "Romola," — not, however, as she had personally observed it, but as drawn from books, recreating the atmosphere of a long gone time by the power of imagination.

The earlier works of Scott are drawn from memory and personal feeling, rather than from the knowledge he had gained by study. Of "Old Mortality" he writes to Lady Louisa Stuart: "I am complete master of the whole history of these strange times, both of persecutors and persecuted; so I trust I have come decently off."

The divisional grouping of these earlier novels by Scott himself is interesting. In the "Advertisement" to "The Antiquary" he says: "The present work completes a series of fictitious narratives, intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland at three different periods. WAVERLEY embraced the age of our fathers ['T is Sixty Years Since'], GUY MANNERING that of our own youth, and THE ANTIQUARY refers to the last ten years of the eighteenth century." The dedication of "Tales of My Landlord" describes them as "tales illustrative of ancient Scottish manners, and of the traditions of their [his countrymen's] respective districts." They were — *First Series:* "The Black

Dwarf" and "Old Mortality;" *Second Series:* "The Heart of Mid-Lothian;" *Third Series:* "The Bride of Lammermoor" and "A Legend of Montrose;" *Fourth Series:* "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous." These all (except the fourth series, in 1832) appeared in the six years from 1814 to 1820, and besides these, "Rob Roy," "Ivanhoe," and "The Monastery."

With the publication of "Old Mortality" in 1816, then, Scott introduced the first of his historical novels, which had great fascination for students. Who ever painted the old Cameronian with more felicity? Who ever described the peculiarities of the Scottish Calvinists during the reign of the last of the Stuarts with more truthfulness, — their severity, their strict and Judaical observance of the Sabbath, their hostility to popular amusements, their rigid and legal morality, their love of theological dogmas, their inflexible prejudices, their lofty aspirations? Where shall we find in literature a sterner fanatical Puritan than John Balfour of Burley, or a fiercer royalist than Graham of Claverhouse? As a love-story this novel is not remarkable. It is not in the description of passionate love that Scott anywhere excels. His heroines, with two or three exceptions, would be called rather tame by the modern reader, although they win respect for their domestic virtues and sterling elements of char-

acter. His favorite heroes are either Englishmen of good family, or Scotchmen educated in England, — gallant, cultivated, and reproachless, but without any striking originality or intellectual force.

"Rob Roy" was published in the latter part of 1817, and was received by the public with the same unabated enthusiasm which marked the appearance of "Guy Mannering" and the other romances. An edition of ten thousand was disposed of in two weeks, and the subsequent sale amounted to forty thousand more. The scene of this story is laid in the Highlands of Scotland, with an English hero and a Scottish heroine; and in this fascinating work the political history of the times (forty years earlier than the period of "Waverley") is portrayed with great impartiality. It is a description of the first Jacobite rising against George I. in the year 1715. In this novel one of the greatest of Scott's creations appears in the heroine, Diana Vernon, — rather wild and masculine, but interesting from her courage and virtue. The character of Baillie Jarvie is equally original and more amusing.

The general effect of "Rob Roy," as well as of "Waverley" and "Old Mortality," was to make the Scottish Highlanders and Jacobites interesting to English readers of opposite views and feelings, without arousing hostility to the reigning royal family. The Highlanders a hundred years ago were viewed by the

English with sentiments nearly similar to those with which the Puritan settlers of New England looked upon the Indians, — at any rate, as freebooters, robbers, and murderers, who were dangerous to civilization; and the severities of the English government toward these lawless clans, both as outlaws and as foes of the Hanoverian succession, were generally condoned by public opinion. Scott succeeded in producing a better feeling among both the conquerors and the conquered. He modified general sentiment by his impartial and liberal views, and allayed prejudices. The Highlanders thenceforth were regarded as a body of men with many interesting traits, and capable of becoming good subjects of the Crown; while their own hatred and contempt of the Lowland Saxon were softened by the many generous and romantic incidents of these tales. Two hitherto hostile races were drawn into neighborly sympathy. Travellers visited the beautiful Highland retreats, and returned with enthusiastic impressions of the country. To no other man does Scotland owe so great a debt of gratitude as to Walter Scott, not only for his poetry and novels, but for showing the admirable traits of a barren country and a fierce population, and contributing to bring them within the realm of civilization. A century or two ago the Highlands of Scotland were peopled by a race

in a state of perpetual conflict with civilization, averse to labor, gaining (except such of them as were enrolled in the English Army) a precarious support by plunder, black-mailing, smuggling, and other illegal pursuits. Now they compose a body of hard-working, intelligent, and law-abiding laborers, cultivating farms, raising cattle and sheep, and pursuing the various branches of industry which lead to independence, if not to wealth. The traveller among the Highlanders feels as secure and is made as comfortable as in any part of the island; while revelations of their shrewd intelligence and unsuspected wit, in the stories of Barrie and Crockett, show what a century of Calvinistic theology — as the chief mental stimulant — has done in developing blossoms from that thistle-like stock.

Scott had now all the fame and worldly prosperity which any literary man could attain to, — for his authorship of the novels, although unacknowledged, was more and more generally believed, and after 1821 not denied. He lived above the atmosphere of envy, honored by all classes of people, surrounded with admiring friends and visitors. He had an income of at least £10,000 a year. Wherever he journeyed he was treated with the greatest distinction. In London he was cordially received as a distinguished guest in any circle he chose. The highest nobles paid homage

to him. The King made him a baronet, — the first purely literary man in England to receive that honor. He now became ambitious to increase his lands; and the hundred acres of farm at Abbotsford were enlarged by new purchases, picturesquely planted with trees and shrubberies, while "the cottage grew to a mansion, and the mansion to a castle," with its twelve hundred surrounding acres, cultivated and made beautiful.

Scott's correspondence with famous people was immense, besides his other labors as farmer, lawyer, and author. Few persons of rank or fame visited Edinburgh without paying their respects to its most eminent citizen. His country house was invaded by tourists. He was on terms of intimacy with some of the proudest nobles of Scotland. His various works were the daily food not only of his countrymen, but of all educated Europe. "Station, power, wealth, beauty, and genius strove with each other in every demonstration of respect and worship."

And yet in the midst of this homage and increasing prosperity, one of the most fortunate of human beings, Scott's head was not turned. His habitual modesty preserved his moral health amid all sorts of temptation. He never lost his intellectual balance. He assumed no airs of superiority. His manners were simple and unpretending to the last. He praised all literary productions except his own. His life in Edin-

burgh was plain, though hospitable and free; and he seemed to care for few luxuries aside from books, of which he made a large collection. The furniture of his houses in Edinburgh and at Abbotsford was neither showy nor luxurious. He was extraordinarily fond of dogs and all domestic animals, who — sympathetic creatures as they are — unerringly sought him out and lavished affection upon him.

When Scott lived in Castle Street he was not regarded by Edinburgh society as particularly brilliant in conversation, since he never aspired to lead by learned disquisitions. He told stories well, with great humor and pleasantry, to amuse rather than to instruct. His talk was almost homely. The most noticeable thing about it was common-sense. Lord Cockburn said of him that "his sense was more wonderful than his genius." He did not blaze like Macaulay or Mackintosh at the dinner-table, nor absorb conversation like Coleridge and Sydney Smith. "He disliked," says Lockhart, "mere disquisitions in Edinburgh and prepared impromptus in London." A *doctrinaire* in society was to him an abomination. Hence, until his fame was established by the admiration of the world, Edinburgh professors did not see his greatness. To them he seemed commonplace, but not to such men as Hallam or Moore or Rogers or Croker or Canning.

Notwithstanding Scott gave great dinners occa-

sionally, they appear to have been a bore to him, and he very rarely went out to evening entertainments, although at public dinners his wit and sense made him a favorite chairman. He retired early at night and rose early in the morning, and his severest labors were before breakfast, — his principal meal. He always dined at home on Sunday, with a few intimate friends, and his dinner was substantial and plain. He drank very little wine, and preferred a glass of whiskey-toddy to champagne or port. He could not distinguish between madeira and sherry. He was neither an epicure nor a gourmand.

After Scott had become world-famous, his happiest hours were spent in enlarging and adorning his land at Abbotsford, and in erecting and embellishing his baronial castle. In this his gains were more than absorbed. He loved that castle more than any of his intellectual creations, and it was not completed until nearly all his novels were written. Without personal extravagance, he was lavish in the sums he spent on Abbotsford. Here he delighted to entertain his distinguished visitors, of whom no one was more welcome than Washington Irving, whom he liked for his modesty and quiet humor and unpretending manners. Lockhart writes: "It would hardly, I believe, be too much to affirm that Sir Walter Scott entertained under his roof, in the course of the seven or eight

brilliant seasons when his prosperity was at its height, as many persons of distinction in rank, in politics, in art, in literature, and in science, as the most princely nobleman of his age ever did in the like space of time."

One more unconscious, apparently, of his great powers has been rarely seen among literary men, especially in England and France, — affording a striking contrast in this respect to Dryden, Pope, Voltaire, Byron, Bulwer, Macaulay, Carlyle, Hugo, Dumas, and even Tennyson. Great lawyers and great statesmen are rarely so egotistical and conceited as poets, novelists, artists, and preachers. Scott made no pretensions which were offensive, or which could be controverted. His greatest aspiration seems to have been to be a respectable landed proprietor, and to found a family. An English country gentleman was his beau-ideal of happiness and contentment. Perhaps this was a weakness; but it was certainly a harmless and amiable one, and not so offensive as intellectual pride. Scott indeed, while without vanity, had pride; but it was of a lofty kind, disdaining meanness and cowardice as worse even than transgressions which have their origin in unregulated passions.

From the numerous expletives which abound in Scott's letters, such as are not now considered in

good taste among gentlemen, I infer that like most gentlemen of his social standing in those times he was in the habit of using, when highly excited or irritated, what is called profane language. After he had once given vent to his feelings, however, he was amiable and forgiving enough for a Christian sage, who never harbored malice or revenge. He had great respect for the military profession, — probably because it was the great prop and defence of government and established institutions, for he was the most conservative of aristocrats. And yet his aristocratic turn of mind never conflicted with his humane disposition, — never made him a snob. He abhorred all vulgarity. He admired genius and virtue in whatever garb they appeared. He was as kind to his servants, and to poor and unfortunate people, as he was to his equals in society, being eminently big-hearted. It was only fools, who made great pretensions, that he despised and treated with contempt.

No doubt Scott was bored by the numerous visitors, whether invited or uninvited, who came from all parts of Great Britain, from America, and even from continental Europe, to do homage to his genius, or to gratify their curiosity. Sometimes as many as thirty guests sat down to his banqueting-table at once. He entertained in baronial style, but without ostentation

or prodigality, and on old-fashioned dishes. He did not like French cooking, and his simple taste in the matters of beverage we have already noted. The people to whom he was most attentive were the representatives of ancient families, whether rich or poor.

Scott was very kind to literary men in misfortune, and his chosen friends were authors of eminence,—like Miss Edgeworth, Joanna Baillie, Thomas Moore, Crabbe, Southey, Wordsworth, Sir Humphry Davy, Dr. Wollaston the chemist, Henry Mackenzie, etc. He was very intimate with the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Montagu, and other noblemen. He was visited by dukes and princes, as well as by ladies of rank and fame. George IV. sent him valuable presents, and showed him every mark of high consideration. Cambridge and Oxford tendered to him honorary degrees. Wherever he travelled, he was received with honor and distinction and flatteries. But he did not like flatteries; and this was one reason why he did not openly acknowledge his authorship of his novels, until all doubt was removed by the masterly papers of John Leycester Adolphus in 1821.

Scott's correspondence must have been enormous, for his postage bills amounted to £150 per annum, besides the aid he received from franks, which with his natural economy he made no scruple in liberally

using. Perhaps his most confidential letters were, like Byron's, written to his publishers and printers, though many such were addressed to his son-in-law Lockhart, and to his dearest friend William Erskine. But he had also some admirable women friends, with whom he corresponded freely. Some of the choicest of his recently-published Letters are to Lady Abercorn, who was an intimate and helpful friend; to Miss Anna Seward, a literary confidant of many years; to Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Bute, and granddaughter of Mary Wortley Montagu, one of the few who knew from the first of his "Waverley" authorship; and to Mrs. John Hughes, an early and most affectionate friend, whose grandson, Thomas Hughes, has made famous the commonplace name of "Tom Brown" in our own day.

Scott's letters show the man, — frank, cordial, manly, tender, generous, finding humor in difficulties, pleasure in toil, satisfaction in success, a proud courage in adversity, and the purest happiness in the affection of his friends.

How Scott found time for so much work is a mystery, — writing nearly three novels a year, besides other literary labors, attending to his duties in the Courts, overlooking the building of Abbotsford and the cultivation of his twelve hundred acres, and entertaining more guests than Voltaire did at Ferney.

He was too much absorbed by his legal duties and his literary labors to be much of a traveller; yet he was a frequent visitor to London, saw something of Paris, journeyed through Ireland, was familiar with the Lake region in England, and penetrated to every interesting place in Scotland. He did not like London, and took little pleasure in the ovations he received from people of rank and fashion. As a literary lion at the tables of "the great," he disappointed many of his admirers, since he made no effort to shine. It was only in his modest den in Castle Street, or in rambles in the country or at Abbotsford, that he felt himself at home, and appeared to the most advantage.

It would be pleasant to leave this genuinely great man in the full flush of health, creative power, inward delight and outward prosperity; but that were to leave unwritten the finest and noblest part of his life. It is to the misfortunes which came upon him that we owe both a large part of his splendid achievements in literature and our knowledge of the most admirable characteristics of the man.

My running record of his novels last mentioned "The Monastery," issued in 1820, in the same year with perhaps the prime favorite of all his works, "Ivanhoe," the romantic tale of England in the crusading age of Richard the Lion-Hearted. In 1821 he

put forth the fascinating Elizabethan tale of "Kenilworth." In 1822 came "The Pirate" (the tale of sea and shore that inspired James Fenimore Cooper to write "The Pilot" and his other sea-stories) and "The Fortunes of Nigel;" in 1823, "Peveril of the Peak" and "Quentin Durward," both among his best; in 1824, "St. Ronan's Well" and "Redgauntlet;" and in 1825, two more Tales of the Crusaders, — "The Betrothed" and "The Talisman," the latter probably sharing with "Ivanhoe" the greatest popularity.

In the winter of 1825–1826, a widespread area of commercial distress resulted in the downfall of many firms; and among others to succumb were Hurst & Robinson, publishers, whose failure precipitated that of Constable & Co., Scott's publishers, and of the Ballantynes his printers, with whom he was a secret partner, who were largely indebted to the Constables and so to the creditors of that house. The crash came January 16, 1826, and Scott found himself in debt to the amount of about £147,000, — or nearly $735,000.

Such a vast misfortune, overwhelming a man at the age of fifty-five, might well crush out all life and hope and send him into helpless bankruptcy, with the poor consolation that, though legally responsible, he was not morally bound to pay other people's debts. But Scott's own sanguine carelessness had been partly

to blame for the Ballantyne failure; and he faced the billow as it suddenly appeared, bowed to it in grief but not in shame, and, while not pretending to any stoicism, instantly resolved to devote the remainder of his life to the repayment of the creditors.

The solid substance of manliness, honor, and cheerful courage in his character; the genuine piety with which he accepted the "dispensation," and wrote "Blessed be the name of the Lord;" the unexampled steadiness with which he comforted his wife and daughters while girding himself to the daily work of intellectual production amidst his many distresses; the sweetness of heart with which he acknowledged the sympathy and declined the offers of help that poured in upon him from every side (one poor music teacher offering his little savings of £600, and an anonymous admirer urging upon him a loan of £30,000), — all this is the beauty that lighted up the black cloud of Scott's adversity. His efforts were finally successful, although at the cost of his bodily existence. Lockhart says: "He paid the penalty of health and life, but he saved his honor and his self-respect.

'The glory dies not, and the grief is past.'"

"Woodstock," then about half-done, was completed in sixty-nine days, and issued in March, 1826, bringing

in about $41,000 to his creditors. His "Life of Napoleon," published in June, 1827, produced $90,000. In 1827, also, Scott issued "Chronicles of the Canongate," First Series (several minor stories), and the First Series of "Tales of a Grandfather;" in 1828, "The Fair Maid of Perth" (Second Series of the "Chronicles"), and more "Tales of a Grandfather;" in 1829, "Anne of Geierstein," more "Tales of a Grandfather," the first volume of a "History of Scotland," and a collective edition of the Waverley Novels in forty-eight volumes, with new Introductions, Notes, and careful corrections and improvements of the text throughout, — in itself an immense labor; in 1830, more "Tales of a Grandfather," a three volume "History of France," and Volume II. of the "History of Scotland;" in 1831, and finally, a Fourth Series of "Tales of My Landlord," including "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous."

This completes the list of Scott's greater productions; but it should be remembered that during all the years of his creative work he was incessantly doing critical and historical writing, — producing numerous reviews, essays, ballads; introductions to divers works; biographical sketches for Ballantyne's "Novelist's Library," — the works of fifteen celebrated English writers of fiction, Fielding, Smollett, etc.; letters and pamphlets; dramas; even a few

religious discourses; and his very extensive and interesting private correspondence. He was such a marvel of productive brain-power as has seldom, if ever, been known to humanity.

The illness and death of Scott's beloved wife, but four short months after his commercial disaster, was a profound grief to him; and under the exhausting pressure of incessant work during the five years following, his bodily power began to fail, — so that in October, 1831, after a paralytic shock, he stopped all literary labor and went to Italy for recuperation. The following June he returned to London, weaker in both mind and body; was taken to Abbotsford in July; and on the 21st September, 1832, with his children about him, the kindly, manly, brave, and tender spirit passed away.

At the time of his death Sir Walter had reduced his great indebtedness to $270,000. A life insurance of $110,000, $10,000 in the hands of his trustees, and $150,000 advanced by Robert Cadell, an Edinburgh bookseller, on the copyrights of Scott's works, cleared away the last remnant of the debt; and within twenty years Cadell had reimbursed himself, and made a handsome profit for his own account and that of the family of Sir Walter.

The moneyed details of Scott's literary life have been made a part of this brief sketch, both because

his phenomenal fecundity and popularity offer a convenient measure of his power, and because the fiscal misfortune of his later life revealed a simple grandeur of character even more admirable than his mental force. "Scott ruined!" exclaimed the Earl of Dudley when he heard of the trouble. "The author of Waverley ruined! Good God! let every man to whom he has given months of delight give him a sixpence, and he will rise to-morrow morning richer than Rothschild!" But the sturdy Scotchman accepted no dole; he set himself to work out his own salvation. William Howitt, in his "Homes and Haunts of Eminent British Poets," estimated that Scott's works had produced as profits to the author or his trustees at least £500,000, — nearly $2,500,000: this in 1847, over fifty years ago, and only forty-five years from Scott's first original publication. Add the results of the past fifty years, and, remembering that this gives but the profits, conceive the immense sums that have been freely paid by the intelligent British public for their enjoyment of this great author's writings. Then, besides all this, recall the myriad volumes of Scott sold in America, which paid no profit to the author or his heirs. There is no parallel.

Voltaire's renown and monetary rewards, as the master-writer of the eighteenth century, offer the

only case in modern times that approaches Scott's success; yet Voltaire's vast wealth was largely the result of successful speculation. As a purely popular author, whose wholesome fancy, great heart, and tireless industry, has delighted millions of his fellowmen, Scott stands alone; while, as a man, he holds the affection and respect of the world. Even though it be that the fashion of his workmanship passeth away, wonder not, lament not. With Mithridates he could say, "I have lived." What great man can say more?

LORD BYRON.

1788–1824.

POETIC GENIUS.

LXXXIV.

LORD BYRON.

POETIC GENIUS.

IT is extremely difficult to depict Lord Byron, and even presumptuous to attempt it. This is not only because he is a familiar subject, the triumphs and sorrows of whose career have been often portrayed, but also because he presents so many contradictions in his life and character, — lofty yet degraded, earnest yet frivolous, an impersonation of noble deeds and sentiments, and also of almost every frailty which Christianity and humanity alike condemn. No great man has been more extravagantly admired, and none more bitterly assailed; but generally he is regarded as a fallen star, — a man with splendid gifts which he wasted, for whom pity is the predominant sentiment in broad and generous minds. With all his faults, the English-speaking people are proud of him as one of the greatest lights in our literature; and in view of the brilliancy of his literary career his own nation in particular does not like to have his de-

fects and vices dwelt upon. It blushes and condones. It would fain blot out his life and much of his poetry if, without them, it could preserve the best and grandest of his writings, — that ill-disguised autobiography which goes by the name of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," in which he soars to loftier flights than any English poet from Milton to his own time. Like Shakespeare, like Dryden, like Pope, like Burns, he was a born poet; while most of the other poets, however eminent and excellent, were simply made, — made by study and labor on a basis of talent, rather than exalted by native genius as he was, speaking out what he could not help, and revelling in the richness of unconscious gifts, whether for good or evil.

Byron was a man with qualities so generous, yet so wild, that Lamartine was in doubt whether to call him angel or devil. But, whether angel or devil, his life is the saddest and most interesting among all the men of letters in the nineteenth century.

Of course, most of our material comes from his Life and Letters, as edited by his friend and brother-poet, Thomas Moore. This biographer, I think, has been unwisely candid in the delineation of Byron's character, making revelations that would better have remained in doubt, and on which friendship at least should have prompted him to a discreet silence.

Lord Byron was descended from the Byrons of Normandy who accompanied William the Conqueror in his invasion of England, of which illustrious lineage the poet was prouder than of his poetry. In the reign of Henry VIII., on the dissolution of the monasteries, a Byron came into possession of the old mediæval abbey of Newstead. In the reign of James I., Sir John Byron was made a knight of the Order of the Bath. In 1784 the father of the poet, a dissipated captain of the Guards, being in embarrassed circumstances, married a rich Scotch heiress of the name of Gordon. Handsome and reckless, "Mad Jack Byron" speedily spent his wife's fortune; and when he died, his widow, being reduced to a pittance of £150 a year, retired to Scotland to live, with her infant son who had been born in London. She was plain Mrs. Byron, widow of a "younger son," with but little expectation of future rank. She was a woman of caprices and eccentricities, and not at all fitted to superintend the education of her wayward boy.

Hence the childhood and youth of Byron were sad and unfortunate. His temper was violent and passionate. A malformation of his foot made him peculiarly sensitive, and the unwise treatment of his mother, fond and harsh by turns, destroyed maternal authority. At five years of age, he was

sent to a day-school in Aberdeen, where he made but slim attainments. Though excitable and ill-disciplined, he is said to have been affectionate and generous, and perfectly fearless. A fit of sickness rendered his removal from this school necessary, and he was sent to a summer resort among the Highlands. His early impressions were therefore favorable to the development of the imagination, coming as they did from mountains and valleys, rivulets and lakes, near the sources of the Dee. At the age of eight, he wrote verses and fell in love, like Dante at the age of nine.

On the death of the grandson of the old Lord Byron in 1794, this unpromising youth became the heir-apparent to the barony. Nor did he have to wait long; for soon after, his grand-uncle died, and the young Byron, whose mother was struggling with poverty, became a ward of Chancery; and the Earl of Carlisle — one of the richest and most powerful noblemen of the realm, a nephew by marriage of the deceased peer — was appointed his guardian. This cold, formal, and politic nobleman took but little interest in his ward, leaving him to the mismanagement of his mother, who, with her boy, at the age of ten, now removed to Newstead, the seat of his ancestors, — the government, meanwhile, for some reason which is not explained, having conferred on her a pension of £300 a year.

One of the first things that Mrs. Byron did on her removal to Newstead was to intrust her son to the care of a quack in Nottingham, in order to cure him of his lameness. As the doctor was not successful, the boy was removed to London with the double purpose of effecting a cure under an eminent surgeon, and of educating him according to his rank; for his education thus far had been sadly neglected, although it would appear that he was an omnivorous reader in a desultory kind of way. The lameness was never cured, and through life was a subject of bitter sensitiveness on his part. Dr. Glennie of Dulwich, to whose instruction he was now confided, found him hard to manage, because of his own undisciplined nature and the perpetual interference of his mother. His progress was so slow in Latin and Greek that at the end of two years, in 1801, he was removed to Harrow, — one of the great public schools of England, of which Dr. Drury was head-master. For a year or two, owing to that constitutional shyness which is so often mistaken for pride, young Byron made but few friendships, although he had for school-fellows many who were afterwards distinguished, including Sir Robert Peel. Before he left this school for Cambridge, however, he had made many friends whom he never forgot, being of a very generous and loving disposition. I think that those years at Harrow were the happiest

he ever knew, for he was under a strict discipline, and was too young to indulge in those dissipations which were the bane of his subsequent life. But he was not distinguished as a scholar, in the ordinary sense, although in his school-boy days he wrote some poetry remarkable for his years, and read a great many books. He read in bed, read when no one else read, read while eating, read all sorts of books, and was capable of great sudden exertions, but not of continuous drudgeries, which he always abhorred. In the year 1803, when a youth of fifteen, he formed a strong attachment for a Miss Chaworth, two years his senior, who, looking upon him as a mere school-boy, treated him cavalierly, and made some slighting allusion to "that lame boy." This treatment both saddened and embittered him. When he left school for college he had the reputation of being an idle and a wilful boy, with a very imperfect knowledge of Latin and Greek.

Young Byron entered Trinity College in 1805, poorly prepared, and was never distinguished there for those attainments which win the respect of tutors and professors. He wasted his time, and gave himself up to pleasures, — riding, boating, bathing, and social hilarities, — yet reading more than anybody imagined, and writing poetry, for which he had an extraordinary facility, yet not contending for college prizes. His

intimate friends were few, but to his chosen circle he was faithful and affectionate. No one at this time would have predicted his future eminence. A more unpromising youth did not exist within the walls of his college. He had a most unfortunate temper, which would have made him unhappy under any circumstances in which he could be placed. This temper, which he inherited from his mother — passionate, fitful, defiant, restless, wayward, melancholy — inclined him naturally to solitude, and often isolated him even from his friends and companions. He brooded upon supposed wrongs, and created in his soul strong likes and dislikes. What is worse, he took no pains to control this temperament; and at last it mastered him, drove him into every kind of folly and rashness, and made him appear worse than he really was.

This inborn tendency to moodiness, pride, and recklessness should be considered in our estimate of Byron, and should modify any harshness of judgment in regard to his character, which, in some other respects, was interesting and noble. He was not at all envious, but frank, warm-hearted, and true to those he loved, who were, however, very few. If he had learned self-control, and had not been spoiled by his mother, his career might have been far different from what it was, and would have sustained the

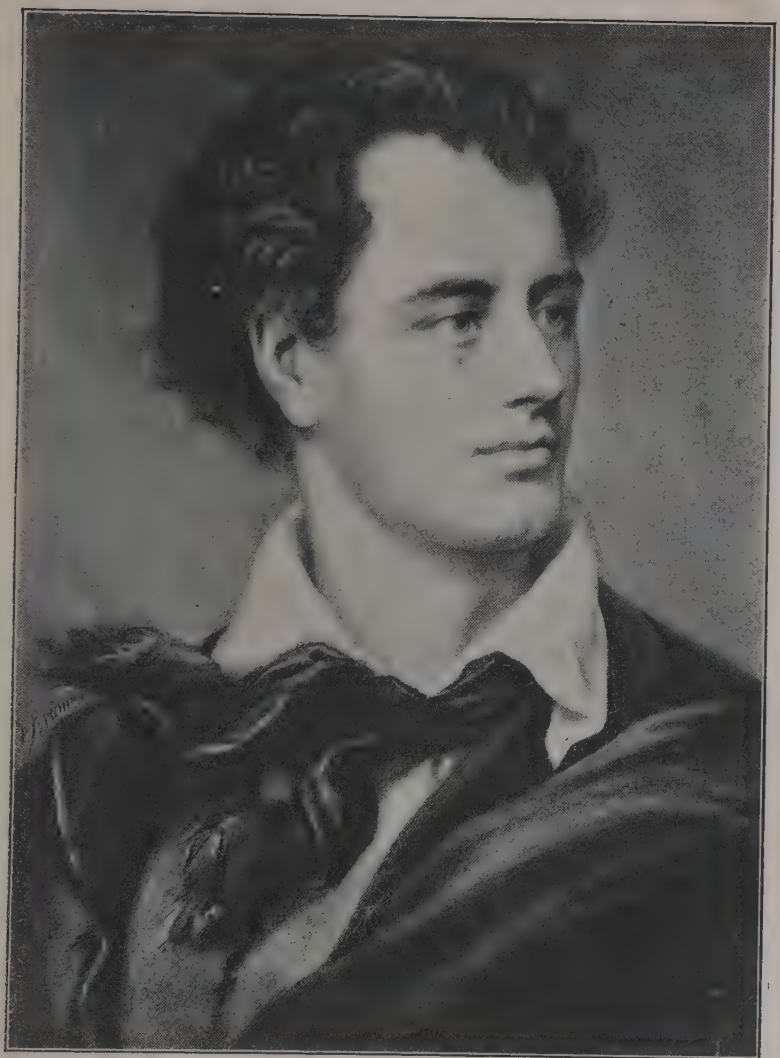
admiration which his brilliant genius called out from both high and low.

As it was, Byron left college with dangerous habits, with no reputation for scholarship, with but few friends, and an uncertain future. His bright and witty bursts of poetry, wonderful as the youthful effusions of Dryden and Pope, had made him known to a small circle, but had not brought fame, for which his soul passionately thirsted from first to last. For a nobleman he was poor and embarrassed, and his youthful extravagances had tied up his inherited estate. He was cast upon the world like a ship without a rudder and without ballast. He was aspiring indeed, but without a plan, tired out and disgusted before he was twenty-one, having prematurely exhausted the ordinary pleasures of life, and being already inclined to that downward path which leadeth to destruction. This was especially marked in his relations with women, whom generally he flattered, despised, and deserted, as the amusements of an idle hour, and yet whose society he could not do without in the ardor of his impulsive and ungoverned affections. In that early career of unbridled desire for excitement and pleasure, nowhere do we see a sense of duty, a respect for the opinions of the good, a reverence for religious institutions, or self-restraint of any kind; but these defects were partly covered over by his many virtues and his exalted rank.

Thus far Byron was comparatively unknown. Not yet was he even a favorite in society, beautiful and brilliant as he was; for he had few friends, not much money, and many enemies, whom he made by his scorn and defiance, — a born aristocrat, without having penetrated those exclusive circles to which his birth entitled him. He was always quarrelling with his mother, and was treated with indifference by his guardian. He was shunned by those who adhered to the conventionalities of life, and was pursued by bailiffs and creditors, — since his ancestral estates, small for his rank, were encumbered and mortgaged, and Newstead Abbey itself was in a state of dilapidation.

Within a year from leaving Cambridge, in 1807, Byron published a volume of his juvenile poems; and although they were remarkable for a young man of twenty, they were not of sufficient merit to attract the attention of the public. At this time he was abstemious in eating, wishing to reduce a tendency to corpulence. He could practise self-denial if it were to make his person attractive, especially to ladies. Nor was he idle. His reading, if desultory, was vast; and from the list of books which his biographer has noted it would seem that Macaulay never read more than Byron in a given time, — all the noted historians of England, Germany, Rome, and

Greece, with innumerable biographies, miscellanies, and even divinity, the raw material which he afterwards worked into his poems. How he found time to devour so many solid books is to me a mystery. These were not merely European works, but Asiatic also. He was not a critical scholar, but he certainly had a passing familiarity with almost everything in literature worth knowing, which he subsequently utilized, as seen in his "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage." A college reputation was nothing to him, any more than it was to Swift, Goldsmith, Churchill, Gibbon, and many other famous men of letters, who left on record their dislike of the English system of education. Among these were even such men as Addison, Cowper, Milton, and Dryden, who were scholars, but who alike felt that college honors and native genius did not go hand in hand, — which might almost be regarded as the rule, but for a few remarkable exceptions, like Sir Robert Peel and Gladstone. And yet it would be unwise to decry college honors, since not one in a hundred of those who obtain them by their industry, aptness, and force of will can lay claim to what is called genius, — the rarest of all gifts. Moreover, how impossible it is for college professors to detect in students, with whom they are imperfectly acquainted, extraordinary faculties, more especially if the young men are apparently



From the painting by P. Krämer

LORD BYRON

idle and negligent, and contemptuous of the college curriculum.

It was a bitter pill for Lord Byron when his juvenile poems, called "Hours of Idleness," were so severely attacked by the Edinburgh Review. They might have escaped the searching eyes of the critics had the author not been a lord. At that time the great Reviews had just been started; and it was the especial object of the Edinburgh Review to handle authors roughly, — to condemn and not to praise. Criticism was not then a science, as it became fifty years later, in the hands of Sainte-Beuve, who endeavored to review every production fairly and justly. There was nothing like justice entering into the head of Jeffrey or Sydney Smith or Brougham, or later on of Macaulay, whose articles were often written for political party effect. Critics, from the time of Swift down to the middle of the century, aimed to demolish enemies, and to make party capital; hence, as a general thing, their articles were not criticisms at all, but attacks. And as even an Achilles was vulnerable in his heel, so most intellectual giants have some weak point for the shafts of malice to penetrate. Yet it is the weaknesses of great men that people like to quote.

If Byron was humiliated, enraged, and embittered by the severity of the Edinburgh Review, he was not

crushed. He rallied, collected his unsuspected strength, and shattered his opponents by one of the wittiest, most brilliant, and most unscrupulous satires in our literature, which he called "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." At the height of his fame he regretted and suppressed this youthful production of malice and bitterness. Yet it was the beginning of his great career, both as to a consciousness of his own powers and in attracting the public attention. It was doubtless unwise, since he attacked many who were afterwards his friends, and since he sowed the seeds of hatred among those who might otherwise have been his admirers or apologists. He had to learn the truth that "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." The creators of public opinion in reference to Byron have not been women of fashion, or men of the world, but literary lions themselves, — like Thackeray, who detested him, and the whole school of pharisaic ecclesiastical dignitaries, who abhorred in him sentiments which they condoned in Fielding, in Burns, in Rousseau, and in Voltaire.

Before his bitter satire was published, however, Byron took his seat in the House of Lords, not knowing any peer sufficiently to be introduced by him. His guardian, Lord Carlisle, treated him very shabbily, refusing to furnish to the Lord Chancellor some important information, of a technical kind,

which refusal delayed the ceremony for several weeks, until the necessary papers could be procured from Cornwall relating to the marriage of one of his ancestors. Unfriended and alone, Byron sat on the scarlet benches of the House of Lords until he was formally admitted as a peer. But when the Lord Chancellor left the woolsack to congratulate him, and with a smiling face extended his hand, the embittered young peer bowed coldly and stiffly, and simply held out two or three of his fingers,—an act of impudence for which there was no excuse.

It is difficult to understand why Lord Byron should have had so few friends or even acquaintances at that time among people of his rank. At twenty-one, he was a lonely and solitary man, mortified by the attack of the Edinburgh Review, exasperated by injustice, morose even to misanthropy, and decidedly sceptical in his religious opinions. Newstead Abbey was a burden to him, since he could not keep it up. He owed £10,000. He had no domestic ties, except to a mother with whom he could not live. His poetry had not brought him fame, for which of all things he most ardently thirsted. His love affairs were unfortunate, and tinged his soul with sadness and melancholy. Nor had fashion as yet marked him for her own. He craved excitement, and society to him was dull and conventional.

It is not surprising that under these circumstances Byron made up his mind to travel: he did not much care whither, provided he had new experiences. "The grand tour" which educated young men of leisure and fortune took in that day had no charm for him, since he wished to avoid rather than to seek society in those cities which the English frequented. He did not care to see the literary lions of France or Germany or Italy, for though a nobleman, he was too young and unimportant to be much noticed, and he was too shy and too proud to make advances which might be rebuffed, wounding his *amour propre.*

He set out on his pilgrimage the latter part of June, 1809, in a ship bound for Lisbon, with a small suite of servants. Going to a land where Nature was most enchanting, he was sufficiently enthusiastic over the hills and vales and villages of Portugal. As for comfort, he expected little, and found less; but to this he was indifferent so long as he could swim in the Tagus, and ride on a mule, and procure eggs and wine. He was delighted with Cadiz, to him a Cythera, with its beautiful but uneducated women, where the wives of peasants were on a par with the wives of dukes in cultivation, and where the minds of both had but one idea, — that of intrigue. He hastily travelled through Spain on horseback, in August,

reaching Gibraltar, from which he embarked for Malta and the East.

It was Greece and Turkey that Byron most wished to see and know; and, favored by introductions, he was cordially received by governors and pashas. At Athens, and other classical spots, he lingered enchanted, yet suppressing his enthusiasm in the contempt he had for the affected raptures of ordinary travellers. It was not the country alone, with its classical associations, which interested him, but also its maidens, with their dark hair and eyes, whom he idealized almost into goddesses. Everything he saw was picturesque, unique, and fascinating. The days and weeks flew rapidly away in dreamy enchantment.

After nearly three months at Athens, Byron embarked for Smyrna, and explored the ruins of the old Ionian cities, thence proceeding to Constantinople, with a view of visiting Persia and the farther East. In a letter to Mr. Henry Drury, he says: —

"I have left my home, and seen part of Africa and Asia, and a tolerable portion of Europe. I have been with generals and admirals, princes and pashas, governors and ungovernables. Albania, indeed, I have seen more than any Englishman, except Mr. Leake, — a country rarely visited, from the savage character of the natives, but abounding more in natural beauties than the classical regions of Greece."

A glimpse of Byron's inner life at this time is caught in the following extract from a letter to another friend:

"I have now been nearly a year abroad, and hope you will find me an altered personage, — I do not mean in body, but in manners; for I begin to find out that nothing but virtue will do in this d—d world. I am tolerably sick of vice, which I have tried in its agreeable varieties, and mean on my return to cut all my dissolute acquaintance, leave off wine and carnal company, and betake myself to politics and decorum."

One thing we notice in most of the familiar letters of Byron, — that he makes frequent use of a vulgar expletive. But when I remember that the Prince of Wales, the Lord Chancellor, the judges, the lawyers, the ministers of the Crown, and many other distinguished people were accustomed to use the same expression, I would fain hope that it was not meant for profanity, but was a sort of fashionable slang intended only to be emphatic. Fifty years have seen a great improvement in the use of language, and the vulgarism which then appeared to be of slight importance is now regarded, almost universally with gentlemen, to be at least in very bad taste. How far Byron transgressed beyond the frequent use of this expletive, does not appear either in his letters or in his biography; yet from his irreverent nature, and the society with which he was associated, it is

more than probable that in him profanity was added to the other vices of his times.

Especially did he indulge in drinking to excess in all convivial gatherings. It was seldom that gentlemen sat down to a banquet without each despatching two or three bottles of wine in the course of an evening. No wonder that gout was the pervading disease among county squires, and even among authors and statesman. Morality was not one of the features of English society one hundred years ago, except as it consisted in a scrupulous regard for domesticity, truth, and honor, and abhorrence of meanness and hypocrisy.

It would be difficult to point out any defects and excesses of which Byron was guilty at this period beyond what were common to other fashionable young men of rank and leisure, except a spirit of religious scepticism and impiety, and a wanton and inexcusable recklessness in regard to women, which made him a slave to his passions. The first alienated him, so far as he was known, from the higher respectable classes, who generally were punctilious in the outward observances of religion; and the second made him abhorred by the virtuous middle class, who never condoned his transgressions in this respect. But at this time his character was not generally known. It was not until he was seated on the pinnacle of

fame that public curiosity penetrated the scandals of his private life. He was known only as a young nobleman in quest of the excitements of foreign travel, and his letters of introduction procured him all the society he craved. Not yet had he expressed bitterness and wrath against the country which gave him birth; he simply found England dull, and craved adventures in foreign lands as unlike England as he could find. The East stimulated his imagination, and revived his classical associations. He saw the Orient only as an enthusiastic poet would see it, and as Lamartine saw Jerusalem. But Byron was more curious about the pagan cities of antiquity than concerning the places consecrated by the sufferings of our Lord. He cared more to swim across the Hellespont with Leander than to wander over the sacred hills of Judæa; to idealize a beautiful peasant girl among the ruins of Greece, than converse with the monks of Palestine in their gloomy retreats.

The result of Byron's travels was seen in the first two cantos of "Childe Harold," showing alike the fertility of his mind and the aspirations of a lofty genius. These were published in 1812, soon after his return to England, at the age of twenty-four. They took England by storm, creating both surprise and admiration. Public curiosity and enthusiasm for the young poet, who had mounted to the front ranks

of literature at a single leap, was unbounded and universal. As he himself wrote: "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

Young Byron was now sought, courted, and adored, especially by ladies of the highest rank. Everybody was desirous to catch even a glimpse of the greatest poet that had appeared since Pope and Dryden; any palace or drawing-room he desired to enter was open to him. He was surfeited with roses and praises and incense. He alone took precedence over Scott and Coleridge and Moore and Campbell. For a time his pre-eminence in literature was generally conceded. He was the foremost man of letters of his day, and the greatest popular idol. His rank added to his *éclat*, since not many noblemen were distinguished for genius or literary excellence. His singular beauty of face and person, despite his slight lameness, attracted the admiring gaze of women. What Abélard was in the schools of philosophy, Byron was in the drawing-rooms of London. People forgot his antecedents, so far as they were known, in the intoxication of universal admiration and unbounded worship of genius. No poet in English history was ever seated on a prouder throne, and no heathen deity was ever more indifferent than he to the incense of idolaters.

Far be it from me to attempt an analysis of the merits of the poem with which the fame of Byron

will be forever identified. Its great merits are universally conceded; and while it has defects, — great inequalities in both style and matter; some stanzas supernal in beauty, and others only mediocre, — on the whole, the poem is extraordinary. Byron adopted the Spenserian measure, — perhaps the most difficult of all measures, hard even to read aloud, — in which blank verse seems to blend with rhyme. It might be either to the ear, though to the eye it is elaborate rhyme, — such as would severely task a made poet, but which this born poet seems to have thrown off without labor. The leading peculiarity of the poem is description, — of men and places; of the sea, the mountain, and the river; of Nature in her loveliness and mysteries; of cities and battle-fields consecrated by the heroism of brave and gifted men, in Greece, in Rome, in mediæval Europe, — with swift passing glances at salient points in history, showing extensive reading and deep meditation.

As to the spirit of "Childe Harold," it is not satirical; it is more pensive than bitter, and reveals the loneliness and sorrows of an unsatisfied soul, — the unrest of a pilgrim in search for something new. It seeks to penetrate the secrets of struggling humanity, at war often with those certitudes which are the consolation of our inner life. It everywhere recognizes the soul as that which gives greatest dignity to man. It invokes love

as the noblest joy of life. The poem is one of the most ideal of human productions, soaring beyond what is material and transient. It is not religious, not reverential, not Christian, like the "Divine Comedy" and the "Paradise Lost;" and yet it is lofty, aspiring, exulting in what is greatest in deed or song, destined to immortality of fame and admiration. It is a confession, indirectly, of the follies and shortcomings of the author, and of their retribution, but complains not of the Nemesis that avenges everything. It is sensitive of wrongs and injustices and misrepresentations, but does not hurl anathemas, — speaking in sorrow rather than in anger, except in regard to hypocrisies and shams and lies, when its scorn is intense and terrible.

The whole poem is brilliant and original, but does not flash like fire in a dark night. It was written with the heart's blood, and is as earnest as it is penetrating. It does not ascend to the higher mysteries forever veiled from mortal eye, nor descend to the deepest depths of hatred and despair, but confines itself to those passions which have marked gifted mortals, and those questionings in which all thoughtful minds have ever delighted. It does not make revelations like "Hamlet" or "Macbeth;" it does not explore secrets hidden forever from ordinary minds, like "Faust;" but it muses and meditates on what Fate and Time have brought to pass, — such events as have

been revealed in history. It invokes the neglected but impressive monuments of antiquity to tell the tales of glory and of shame. In moral wisdom it is vastly inferior to Shakspeare, and it is not rich in those wise and striking lines which pass into the proverbs of the world; but it has the glow of a poetic soul, longing for fame, craving love, and not unmindful of immortality. Its most beautiful stanzas are full of tenderness and sadness for lost or unrequited affections; of reproachless sorrow for broken friendships, in which the soul would fain have lived but for inconsistencies and contradictions which made true and permanent love impossible. The poem paints a paradise lost, rather than a paradise regained. I wonder at its popularity, for it seems to me too deep and learned for popular appreciation, except in those stanzas where pathos or enthusiasm, expressed in matchless language, appeal to the heart and soul.

Of all modern poets, Byron is the most human and outspoken, daring to say what many would fear or blush to meditate upon. He fearlessly reveals the infirmities and audacities of a double and mysterious nature, made up of dust and deity, now grovelling in the mire, then borne aloft to the skies, — the football of the eternal powers of good and evil, enslaved and yet to be emancipated, as we may hope, in the

last and final struggle, when the soul is rescued by Omnipotence.

I have alluded to the triumphs of Byron on the publication of "Childe Harold," — but his joys were more than balanced by his sorrows. His mother died suddenly without seeing him. His dearest friend Mathews was drowned. He was hampered by creditors. He made no mark in the House of Lords, and was sick of what he called "parliamentary mummeries." His habits became more and more dissipated among the boon companions who courted his society. His reputation after a while began to wane, for people became ashamed of their enthusiasm. Some critics disparaged his poetry, and conventional circles were shocked by his morals. Three years of London life told on his constitution, and he was completely disenchanted. He sought retirement and solitude, for not even the most brilliant society satisfied him. He wearied of such a woman and admirer as Madame de Staël. He went to Holland House — that resort of all the eminent ones of the time — as seldom as he could. He buried himself with a few intimate friends, chiefly poets, among whom were Moore and Rogers. He saw and liked Sir Walter Scott, but did not push his acquaintance to intimacy. The larger part of his letters were written to Murray, the publisher, who treated him generously; but Byron gave away his

literary gains to personal friends in need. He seemed to scorn copyrights for support. He would write only for fame.

At the age of twenty-seven, in January, 1815, Byron married Miss Milbanke, — a lady whom he did not love, but to whom he was attracted by her supposed wealth, which would patch up his own fortunes. He had great respect for this lady and some friendship; but with all her virtues and attainments she was cold, conventional, and exacting. A mystery shrouds this unfortunate affair, which has never been fully revealed. The upshot was that, to Byron's inexpressible humiliation, in less than a year she left him, never to return. No reasons were given. It was enough that both parties were unhappy, and had cause to be; and both kept silence.

But the voice of rumor and scandal was not silent. All the failings of Byron were now exaggerated and dwelt upon by those who envied him, and by those who hated him, — for his enemies were more numerous than his friends. Those whom he had snubbed or ridiculed or insulted now openly turned against him. The conventional public had a rare subject for their abuse or indignation. Proper people, religious people, and commonplace people, joined in the cry against a man with whom a virtuous woman could not live. Indeed, no woman could have lived

happily with Byron; and very few were the women with whom he could have lived happily, by reason of that irritability and unrest which is so common with genius. The habits of abstraction and contemplation which absorbed much of his time at home were not easily understood by an ordinary woman, to whom social life is necessary.

Byron lived much in his library, which was his solitary luxury. In the revelry of the imagination his heart became cold. "To follow poetry," says Pope, "one must leave father and mother, and cleave to it alone," — as Dante and Petrarch and Milton did. Not even Byron's intense craving for affection could be satisfied when he was dwelling on the ideals which his imagination created, and which scarcely friendship could satisfy. Even so good a man as Carlyle lived among his books rather than in the society of his wife, whom he really loved, and whose virtues and attainments he appreciated and admired. An affectionate woman runs a great risk in marrying an absorbed and preoccupied man of genius, even if his character be reproachless. Unfortunately, the character of Byron was anything but reproachless, and no one knew this better than his wife, which knowledge doubtless alienated what little affection she had for him. He seems to have sought low company even after his marriage, and Lady Byron

has intimated that she did not think him altogether sane. Living with him as his wife was insupportable; but though she separated from him, she did not seek a divorce.

Byron would not have married at all if he had consulted his happiness, and still more his fame. "In reviewing the great names of philosophy and science, we shall find that those who have most distinguished themselves have virtually admitted their own unfitness for the marriage tie by remaining in celibacy, — Newton, Gassendi, Galileo, Descartes, Bayle, Locke, Leibnitz, Boyle, Hume, Gibbon, Macaulay, and a host of others."

The scandal which Byron's separation from his wife created, and his known and open profligacy, at last shut him out from the society of which he had been so bright an ornament. It is a peculiarity of the English people, which redounds to their honor, to exclude from public approbation any man, however gifted or famous, who has outraged the moral sense by open and ill-disguised violation of the laws of morality. The cases of Dilke and Parnell in our own day are illustrations known to all. What in France or Italy is condoned, is never pardoned or forgotten in England. Not even a Voltaire, a Rousseau, or a Mirabeau, had they lived in England, could have been accepted by English society, — much less a man who

scorned and ridiculed it. Even Byron — for a few years the pet, the idol, and the glory of the country — was not too high to fall. To quote one of his own stanzas, —

> "He who ascends to mountain-tops shall find
> The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
> He who surpasses or subdues mankind
> Must look down on the hate of those below.
> Though high above the sun of glory glow,
> And far beneath the earth and ocean spread,
> Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
> Contending tempests on his naked head."

Embarrassed in his circumstances; filled with disgust, mortification, and shame; excluded from the proudest circles, — Byron now resolved to leave England forever, and bury himself in such foreign lands as were most congenial to his tastes and habits. But for his immorality he might still have shined at an exalted height; for he had not yet written anything which shocked the practical English mind. The worst he had written was bitter satire, yet not more bitter than that of Swift or Pope. No defiance, no blasphemous sentiments, or what seemed to many to be such, had yet escaped him. His "Corsair" and his "Bride of Abydos" appeared soon after the "Childe Harold," and added to his fame by their exquisite melody of rhyme and sentimental admiration for Oriental life, — though even these were tinged with

that *abandon* which afterwards made his latter poems a scandal and reproach. "The disappointment of youthful passion, the lassitude and remorse of premature excess, the lone friendlessness of his life," and, I may add, the reproaches of society, induced him to fly from the scene of his brilliant successes, filled with blended sentiments of scorn, hatred, defiance, and despair.

In the Spring of 1816, at the age of twenty-eight, Byron left England forever, — a voluntary exile on the face of the earth, saddened, embittered, and disappointed. It was to Italy that he turned his steps, passing through Brussels and Flanders, lingering on the Rhine, enamored with its ruined castles, still more with Nature, and making a long stay in Switzerland. Here he visited the Castle of Chillon, all the spots made memorable by the abodes of Rousseau, Gibbon, and Madame de Staël, and all the most interesting scenery of the Bernese Alps, — Lake Leman, Interlaken, Thun, the Jungfrau, the glaciers, Brientz, Chamouni, Berne, and on to Geneva, where he made the acquaintance of Shelley and his wife. The Shelleys he found most congenial, and stayed with them some time. While in the neighborhood of Geneva he produced the third canto of "Childe Harold," "The Prisoner of Chillon," "A Dream," and other things. In October, he passed on to Milan, Verona,

and Venice; and in this latter city he took up his residence.

Oh that we could blot out Byron's life in Venice, made up of love adventures and dissipation and utter abandonment to those pleasures that appealed to his lower nature, as if he were possessed by a demon, utterly reckless of his health, his character, and his fame! Venice was then the most immoral city in Italy, given over to idleness and pleasure. It was here that Byron's contempt for woman became fixed, seeing only her weaknesses and follies; and it was this contempt of woman which intensified the abhorrence in which his character was generally held, in the most respectable circles in England. Even in distant Venice his baleful light was not under a bushel, and the scandals of his life extended far and wide, — especially that in reference to Margherita Cogni, an illiterate virago who could neither read nor write, and whom he was finally compelled to discard on account of the violence of her temper, after living with her in the most open manner.

And yet, in all this degradation, he was not idle. How could so prolific a writer be idle! Byron did not ordinarily rise till two o'clock in the afternoon, and spent the interval between his breakfast and dinner in riding on the Lido, — one of those long narrow islands which lie between the Adriatic and

the Lagoon, in the midst of which Venice is built, on the islets arising from its shallow waters. Yet he found time to begin his "Don Juan," besides writing the "Lament of Tasso," the tragedy of "Manfred," and an Armenian grammar, all which appeared in 1817; in 1818, "Beppo," and in 1819, "Mazeppa." He also made a flying trip to Florence and Rome, and some of the finest stanzas of "Childe Harold" are descriptions of the classic ruins and the masterpieces of Grecian and mediæval art, — the beauties and the associations of Italy's great cities.

"I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand!
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the wingèd Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!"

Byron's correspondence was small, being chiefly confined to his publisher, to Moore, and to a few intimate friends. These letters are interesting because of their frankness and wit, although they are not models of fine writing. Indeed, I do not know where to find any specimens of masterly prose in all his compositions. He was simply a poet, facile in every form of measure from Spenser to Campbell. No remarkable prose writings appeared in England at all, at that

time, until Sir Walter Scott's novels were written, and until Macaulay, Carlyle, and Lamb wrote their inimitable essays. Nothing is more heavy and unartistic than Moore's "Life of Byron;" there is hardly a brilliant paragraph in it,—and yet Moore is one of the most musical and melodious of all the English poets. Milton, indeed, was equally great in prose and verse, but very few men have been distinguished as prose writers and poets at the same time. Sir Walter Scott and Southey are the most remarkable exceptions. I think that Macaulay could have been distinguished as a poet, if he had so pleased; but he would have been a literary poet like Wordsworth or Tennyson or Coleridge,—not a man who sings out of his soul because he cannot help it, like Byron or Burns, or like Whittier among our American poets.

It was not until 1819, when Byron had been three years in Venice, that he fell in love with the Countess Guiccioli, the wife of one of the richest nobles of Italy,—young, beautiful, and interesting. This love seems to have been disinterested and lasting; and while it was a violation of all the rules of morality, and would not have been allowed in any other country than Italy, it did not further degrade him. It was pretty much such a love as Voltaire had for Madame de Châtelet; and with it he was at last content. There is no evidence that Byron ever after-

ward loved any other woman; and what is very singular about the affair is that it was condoned by the husband, until it became a scandal even in Italy.

The countess was taken ill on her way to Ravenna, and thither Byron followed her, and lived in the same palace with her, — the palace of her husband, who courted the poet's society, and who afterward left his young countess to free intercourse with Byron at Bologna, — not without a compensation in revenue, which was more disgraceful than the amour itself. About this time Byron would probably have returned to England but for the enchantment which enslaved him. He could not part from the countess, nor she from him.

The Pope pronounced the separation of the count from his wife, and she returned to her father's house on a pittance of £200 a year. She sacrificed everything for the young English poet, — her splendid home, her relatives, her honor, and her pride. Never was there a sadder episode in the life of a man of letters. If Byron had married such a woman in his early life, how different might have been his history! With such a love as she inspired, had he been faithful to it, he might have lived in radiant happiness, the idol and the pride of all admirers of genius wherever the English language is spoken,

seated on a throne which kings might envy. So much have circumstances to do with human destinies! Since Abélard, never was there a man more capable of a genuine fervid love than Byron; and yet he threw himself away. He was his own worst enemy, and all from an ill-regulated nature which he inherited both from his father and his mother, with no Mentor to whom he would listen. And thus his star sunk down in the eternal shades, — a fallen Lucifer expelled from bliss.

I would not condone the waywardness and vices of Byron, or weaken the eternal distinctions between right and wrong. The impression I wish to convey is that there were two very distinctly marked sides to his character; that his conduct was not without palliations, in view of his surroundings, the force of his temptations, and his wayward nature, uncurbed by parental care or early training, indeed rather goaded on by the unfortunate conditions of his youth to find consolation in doing as he liked, without regard to duty or the opinions of society. Born with the keenest sensibilities, with emotive powers of tremendous sweep and force; neglected, crossed, mortified, with no wise guidance, — he was driven in upon himself, and developed an intense self-will, which would endure no control. Unhappy will be the future of that man, however amiable, affectionate, and generous, who, whether from

neglect in youth, like Byron, or from sheer wilfulness in manhood, determines to act as the mood takes him, because he has freedom of will, without regard to the social restraints imposed upon conscience by the unwritten law, which pursues him wherever he goes, even should he fly to the uttermost parts of the earth. No one can escape from moral accountability, whether in a seductive paradise, or in a dungeon, or in a desert. The only stability for society must be in the character of its individual members. Before pleasure comes duty, — to family, to friends, to country, to self, and to the Maker.

This sense of moral accountability Byron seems never to have had, in regard to anybody or anything, his self-indulgence culminating in an egotism melancholy to behold. He would go where he pleased, say what he pleased, write as he pleased, do what he pleased, without any constraint, whether in opposition or not to the customs and rules of society, his own welfare, or the laws of God. It was moral madness pursuing him to destruction,— the logical and necessary sequence of unrestrained self-will, sometimes assuming the form of angelic loveliness and inspiration in the eyes of his idolaters. No counsellor guided him wiser than Moore or Shelley. Even the worldly advice of Rogers and Madame de Staël was thrown away, whenever they presumed to counsel him. No-

body could influence him. His abandonment to fitful labors or pleasures was alike his glory and his shame. After a day of frivolity he would consume the midnight hours in the intensest studies, stimulated by gin, to awake in the morning in lassitude or pain, — for work he must, as well as play. The consequence of this burning the candle at both ends was failing health and diminished energies, until his short race was run. He had produced more poetry at thirty-four years of age than any other English poet at the age of fifty, — some of almost transcendent merit, but more of questionable worth, though not of questionable power. Aside from the "Childe Harold," the "Hebrew Melodies," the "Prisoner of Chillon," and perhaps the "Corsair," the "Bride of Abydos," "Lara," and the "Siege of Corinth," the rest, excepting minor poems, however beautiful in measure and grand in thought, give a shock to the religious or to the moral sentiments. "Cain" and "Manfred" are regarded as almost blasphemous, though probably not so meant to be by the poet, in view of the stirring questions of Grecian tragedy; while the longest of his poems, "Don Juan," is an insult to womanhood and a disgrace to genius; for although containing some of the most exquisite touches of description and finest flights of poetic feeling, its theme is along the lowest level of human passion.

Whatever Byron wrote was unhesitatingly published and read, whether good or evil, whatever were those follies and defiances which excluded him from the best society; and it is a matter of surprise to me that any noted and wealthy publisher could be found, in respectable and conventional England, venal enough to publish perhaps the most corrupting poem in our language, — worse than anything which Boccaccio wrote for his Italian readers, or anything which plain-spoken Fielding and the dramatists of the reign of Charles II. ever allowed to go into print; for though they were coarser in their language, they were not so seductive in their spirit, and did not poison the soul like "Don Juan," the very name of which has become a synonym for extreme depravity. That abominable poem was read because Lord Byron wrote it, and because its immorality was slightly veiled by the beauty of the language, even when a copy could not be found on the table of any respectable drawing-room, and the name of the author was seldom mentioned except with stern and honest censure. It is perhaps fair to quote Murray's own words, throwing the responsibility on the public: "They talked of his immoral writings; but there is a whole row of sermons glued to my shelf. I hate the sight of them. Why don't they buy those?" A fair enough retort; and yet, like the newspaper purveyors of the records of

vice in our own day, the publisher was responsible for making the vile stuff accessible, and thus debasing the public taste.

How different was Byron's painting of Spanish life from that of the immortal Cervantes, whom Lowell places among the five master geniuses of the world! In "Don Quixote" there is not a sentence which does not exalt woman, or which degrades man. A lofty ideal of purity and chivalrous honor permeates every page, even in the most ludicrous scenes. The whole work blazes with wit, and with the wisdom of a proverbial philosophy, uttered by the ignorant squire of a fanatical and bewildered knight; but amidst the practical jokes and follies of all the characters in that marvellous work of fiction, we see also a moral beauty, idealized of course, such as was rivalled only in Spanish art in the Madonnas of Murillo. I believe that in the imaginary sketches of Spanish life as portrayed by Byron, slanders and lies deface the poem from beginning to end. Who is the best authority for truthfulness in the description of Spanish people, Cervantes or Byron? The spiritual loftiness portrayed in the lives of Spanish heroes and heroines, mixed up as it was with the most ludicrous pictures of common life, has made the Spaniard's work of fiction one of the most treasured and enduring monuments of human fame; whereas the insulting innuendoes of the English poet

have gone far to rob him of the glory which he had justly won in his earlier productions, and to make his name a doubt. If, in the course of generations yet to come, the evil which Byron did by that one poem alone shall be forgotten in the services he rendered to our literature by other works, which cannot die, then he may some day be received into the Pantheon of the benefactors of mind.

I would speak with less vehemence in reference to those poems which are generally supposed to be permeated with defiance, scorn, and misanthropy. In "Manfred" and "Cain," it was with Byron a work of art to describe the utterances of impious spirits against the sovereign rule of God. Had he not fallen from high estate as an interpreter of the soul, the critics might have seen here nothing more to condemn than in some of the Grecian tragedies, many passages in the "Paradise Lost," and in the general spirit of "Faust." It is no proof that he was a blasphemer in his heart because he painted blasphemy. To describe a wanderer on the face of the earth, driven hither and thither by pursuing vengeance as the first recorded murderer, the poet was obliged by all the rules of art to put such sentiments into his mouth as accorded with his unrepented crime and his dreadful agonies of mind and soul. Where is the proof that they were *his own* agonies, remorse, despair? Surely, we may pardon

in Byron what we excuse in Goethe in the delineation of unique characters, — the great creations which belong to the realm of the imagination alone. The imputation that the sayings of his fallen fiends were the cherished sentiments of the poet himself, may have been one cause of his contempt for the average intelligence of his countrymen, and for their inveterate and incurable prejudices. Nothing in Dante is more intense and concentrated in language than the malediction of Eve upon her fratricidal son: —

> "May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods
> Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust
> A grave! the Sun his light! and Heaven her God!"

Yet the reader feels the naturalness of this bitter cursing of her own son by the frenzied mother. How could a great artist like Byron put sentiments into the mouth of Cain such as would be harmless in the essays of a country parson? If he painted Lucifer, he must make him speak like Lucifer, not like a theological professor. Nothing could be more ungenerous and narrow than to abuse Byron for a dramatic poem in which some of his characters were fiends rather than men. We have no more right to say that he was an infidel because Cain or Lucifer blasphemed, than to say that Goethe was an atheist because Mephistopheles denied God.

If Byron had avowed atheistical opinions in letters or conversations, that would be another thing; but there is no evidence that he did, and much to the contrary. A few months before he died he was visited by a pious crank, who out of curiosity or Christian zeal sought to know his theological views. Byron treated him with the greatest courtesy, and freely communicated his opinions on religious subjects, — from which it would appear that he differed from church people generally only on the matter of eternal punishment, which he did not believe was consistent with infinite love or infinite justice. Perhaps it would have been wiser if he had not written "Cain" at all, considering how many readers there are without brains, and how large was the class predisposed to judge him harshly in everything. No doubt he was irreligious and sceptical, but it does not follow from this that he was atheistical or blasphemous.

There is doubtless a misanthropic vein in all Byron's later poetry which is not wholesome for many people to read, — especially in "Manfred," one of the bitterest of his productions by reason of sorrows and disappointments and misrepresentations. It was Byron's misfortune to appear worse than he really was, owing to his unconcealed contempt for the opinions of mankind. Yet he could not complain that he reaped what he had not sown. Some of his biographers thought him

to be at this time even morbidly desirous of a bad reputation, — going so far as to write paragraphs against himself in foreign journals, and being filled with glee at the joke, when they were republished in English newspapers. He despised and defied all conventionalities, and conventional England dropped him from her list of favorites.

The life of Byron, strange to say, was less exposed to scandal after he made the acquaintance of the countess who enslaved him, and who was also enslaved in turn. His heart now opened to many noble sentiments. He returned, in a degree, to society, and gave dinners and suppers. He associated with many distinguished patriots and men of genius. He had a strong sympathy with the Italians in their struggle for freedom. One quarter of his income he devoted to charities. He was regular in his athletic exercises, and could swim four hours at a time; he was always proud of swimming across the Hellespont. He was devoted to his natural daughter, and educated her in a Catholic school. He studied more severely all works of art, though his admiration for art was never so great as it was for Nature. The glories and wonders of Nature inspired him with perpetual joys. There is nothing finer in all his poetry than the following stanza: —

> "Ye stars! which are the poetry of Heaven,
> If in your bright leaves we would read the fate

Of men and empires, — 't is to be forgiven
That in our aspirations to be great
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star."

There never was a time when Byron did not seek out beautiful retreats in Nature as the source of his highest happiness. Hence, solitude was nothing to him when he could commune with the works of God. His biographer declares that in 1821 "he was greatly improved in every respect, — in genius, in temper, in moral views, in health and happiness. He has had mischievous passions, but these he seems to have subdued." He was always temperate in his diet, living chiefly on fish and vegetables; and if he drank more wine and spirits than was good for him, it was to rally his exhausted energies. His powers of production were never greater than at this period, but his literary labors were slowly wearing him out. He could not live without work, while pleasure palled upon him. In a letter to a stranger who sought to convert him, he showed anything but anger or contempt. "Do me," says he, "the justice to suppose, that *Video meliora proboque*, however the *deteriora sequor* may have been applied to my conduct." Writing to Murray in 1822, he says: "It is not impossible that I may

have three or four cantos of 'Don Juan' ready by autumn, as I obtained a permission from my dictatress [the Countess Guiccioli] to continue it, — provided always it was to be more guarded and decorous in the continuation than in the commencement." Alas, he could not undo the mischief he had done!

About this time Byron received a visit from Lord Clare, his earliest friend at Cambridge, to whom through life he was devotedly attached, — a friendship which afforded exceeding delight. He never forgot his few friends, although he railed at his enemies. He was ungenerously treated by Leigh Hunt, to whom he rendered every kindness. He says, —

"I have done all I could for him since he came here [Genoa], but it is all most useless. His wife is ill, his six children far from tractable, and in worldly affairs he himself is a child. The death of Shelley left them totally aground; and I could not see them in such a state without using the common feelings of humanity, and what means were in my power, to set them afloat again. . . . As to any community of feeling, thought, or opinion between him and me there is little or none; but I think him a good-principled man, and must do as I would be done by."

Toward Shelley, Byron entertained the greatest respect and affection for his suavity, gentleness, and good breeding; and Shelley's accidental death was a

great shock to him. Among his other intimate acquaintances in Italy were Lord and Lady Blessington, with whom he kept up a pleasant correspondence. The most plaintive, sad, and generous of all his letters was the one he wrote to Lady Byron from Pisa, in 1821, in acknowledgment of the receipt of a tress of his daughter Ada's hair: —

"The time which has elapsed since our separation has been considerably more than the whole brief period of our union and of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake; but now it is over, and irrecoverably so. . . . But this very impossibility of reunion seems to me at least a reason why on all the few points of discussion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as people who are never to meet may preserve more easily than nearer connections. . . . I assure you I bear you now no resentment whatever. Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect upon any but two things, — that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again."

At this period, about a year before Byron's death, Moore thus writes: —

"To the world, and more especially England, he presented himself in no other aspect than that of a stern, haughty misanthrope, self-banished from the society of men, and most of all from that of English-

After a chalk drawing by Miss Curran, at Biscombe, England

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

men. The more beautiful and genial inspirations of his muse were looked upon but as lucid intervals between the paroxysms of an inherent malignancy of nature. But how totally all this differed from the Byron of the social hour, they who lived in familiar intercourse with him may be safely left to tell. As it was, no English gentleman ever approached him with the common forms of introduction, that did not come away at once surprised and charmed by the kind courtesy of his manners, the unpretending play of his conversation, and on nearer intercourse the frank, youthful spirits, to the flow of which he gave way with such zest as to produce the impression that gaiety was after all the true bent of his disposition."

Scott, writing of him after his death, says, —

"In talents he was unequalled; and his faults were those rather of a bizarre temper, arising from an eager and irritable nervous habit, than any depravity of disposition. He was devoid of selfishness, which I take to be the basest ingredient in the human composition. He was generous, humane, and noble-minded, when passion did not blind him."

About this time, 1823, the great struggle of the Greeks to shake off the Ottoman yoke was in progress. I have already in another volume[1] attempted to give the facts in relation to that memorable movement. Christendom sympathized with the gallant

[1] Beacon Lights of History (Vol. IX.).

but apparently hopeless struggle of a weak nation to secure its independence, both from a sentiment of admiration for the freedom of ancient Greece in the period of its highest glories, and from the love of liberty which animated the liberal classes amid the political convulsions of the day. But the governments of Europe were loath to complicate the difficulties which existed between nations in that stormy period, and dared not extend any open aid to struggling Greece, beyond giving their moral aid to the Greek cause, lest it should embroil Europe in war, of which she was weary. Less than ten years had elapsed since Europe had combined to dethrone Napoleon, and some of her leading powers, like Austria and Russia, had a detestation of popular insurrections.

In this complicated state of political affairs, when any indiscretion on the part of friendly governments might kindle anew the flames of war, Lord Byron was living in Genoa, taking such an interest in the Greek struggle that he abandoned poetry for politics. He had always sympathized with enslaved nations struggling for independence, and was driven from Ravenna on account of his alliance with the revolutionary Society of the Carbonari. A new passion now seized him. He entered heart and soul into the struggles of the Greeks. Their cause absorbed him. He would aid them to the full extent of his means.

with money and arms, as a private individual. He would be a political or military hero, — a man of action, not of literary leisure.

Every lover of liberty must respect Byron's noble aspirations to assist the Greeks. It was a new field for him, but one in which he might retrieve his reputation, — for it must be borne in mind that his ruling passion was fame, and that he had gained all he could expect by his literary productions. Whether loved or hated, admired or censured, his poetry had placed him in the front rank of literary geniuses throughout the world. As a poet his immortality was secured. In literary efforts he had also probably exhausted himself; he could write nothing more which would add to his fame, unless he took a long rest and recreation. He was wearied of making poetry; but by plunging into a sea of fresh adventures, and by giving a new direction to his powers, he might be sufficiently renovated, in the course of time, to write something grander and nobler than even "Childe Harold" or "Cain."

Lord Byron at this time was only thirty-five years old, a period when most men begin their best work. His constitution, it is true, was impaired, but he was still full of life and enterprise. He could ride or swim as well as he ever could. The call of a gallant people summoned him to arms, and of all

nations he most loved the Greeks. He was an enthusiast in their cause; he believed that the day of their deliverance was at hand. So he made up his mind to consecrate his remaining energies to effect their independence. He opened a correspondence with the Greek committee in London. He selected a party, including a physician, to sail with him from Geneva. He raised a sum of about £10,000, and on the 13th of July, 1823, embarked with his small party and eight servants, on board the "Hercules" for Greece.

After a short delay at Leghorn the poet reached Cephalonia on the 24th of July. He was enthusiastically received by the Greeks of Argostoli, the principal port, but deemed it prudent to remain there until he could get further intelligence from Corfu and Missolonghi,—visiting, in the interval, some of the neighboring islands consecrated by the muse of Homer.

The dissensions among the Greek leaders greatly embarrassed Byron, but did not destroy his ardor. He saw that the people were degenerate, faithless, and stained with atrocities as disgraceful as those of the Turks themselves. He dared not commit himself to any one of the struggling, envious parties which rallied round their respective chieftains. He lingered for six weeks in Cephalonia without the ordinary comforts of life, yet, against all his habits,

rising at an early hour and attending to business, negotiating bills, and corresponding with the government, so far as there was a recognized central power.

At last, after the fall of Corinth, taken from the Turks, and the arrival at Missolonghi of Prince Mavrocordato, the only leader of the Greeks worthy of the name of statesman, Byron sailed for that city, then invested by a Turkish fleet, and narrowly escaped capture. Here he did all he could to produce union among the chieftains, and took into his pay five hundred Suliotes, acting as their leader. He meditated an attack on Lepanto, which commanded the navigation of the Gulf of Corinth, and received from the government a commission for that enterprise; but dissensions among his men, and intrigues between rival generals, prevented the execution of his project.

It was in Missolonghi, Jan. 22, 1824, that, with the memorandum, "On this day I completed my thirty-sixth year," Byron wrote his latest verses, most pathetically regretting his youth and his unfortunate life, but arousing himself to find in a noble cause a glorious death: —

> "The fire that in my bosom preys
> Is like to some volcanic isle;
> No torch is kindled at its blaze, —
> A funeral pile.
>
> . . . . . .

"Awake! — not Greece: she is awake! —
Awake, my spirit! think through whom
Thy life-blood tastes its parent lake,
And then strike home!

. . . . . .

"Seek out — less often sought than found —
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest!"

Vexations, disappointments, and exposure to the rains of February so wrought upon Byron's eager spirit and weakened body that he was attacked by convulsive fits. The physicians, in accordance with the custom of that time, bled their patient several times, against the protest of Byron himself, which reduced him to extreme weakness. He rallied from the attack for a time, and devoted himself to the affairs of Greece, hoping for the restoration of his health when spring should come. He spent in three months thirty thousand dollars for the cause into which he had so cordially entered. In April he took another cold from severe exposure, and fever set in, — to relieve which bleeding was again resorted to, and often repeated. He was now confined to his room, which he never afterwards left. He at last realized that he was dying, and sent incoherent messages to his sister, to his daughter, and to a few intimate friends. The end came on the 19th of April. The Greek govern-

ment rendered all the honor possible to the illustrious dead. His remains were transferred to England. He was not buried in Westminster Abbey, however, but in the church of Hucknal, near Newstead, where a tablet was erected to his memory by his sister, the Hon. Augusta Maria Leigh.

> "So Harold ends in Greece, his pilgrimage
> There fitly ending, — in that land renowned,
> Whose mighty genius lives in Glory's page,
> He on the Muses' consecrated ground
> Sinking to rest, while his young brows are bound
> With their unfading wreath! To bands of mirth
> No more in Tempe let the pipe resound!
> Harold, I follow to thy place of birth
> The slow hearse, — and thy last sad pilgrimage on earth."

I can add but little to what I have already said in reference to Byron, either as to his character or his poetry. The Edinburgh Review, which in Brougham's article on his early poems had stung him into satire and aroused him to a sense of his own powers, in later years by Jeffrey's hand gave a most appreciative account of his poems, while mourning over his morbid gloom: "'Words that breathe and thoughts that burn' are not merely the ornaments but the common staple of his poetry; and he is not inspired or impressive only in some happy passages, but through the whole body and tissue of his composition." The keen insight and excep-

tional intellect of the philosopher-poet Goethe recognized in him "the greatest talent of our century." His marvellous poetic genius was universally acknowledged in his own day; and more than that, so human was it that it attracted the sympathies of all civilized nations, and, as Lamartine said, "made English literature known throughout Europe." Byron's poetry was politically influential also, by reason of its liberty-loving spirit, — arousing Italy, inspiring the young revolutionists of Germany, and awaking a generous sympathy for Greece. Without the consciousness of any "mission" beyond the expression of his own ebullient nature, this poet contributed no mean impulse to the general emancipation of spirit which has signalized the nineteenth century.

Two generations have passed away since Byron's mortal remains were committed to the dust, and the verdict of his country has not since materially changed, — admiration for his genius *alone*. The light of lesser stars than he shines with brighter radiance. What the enlightened verdict of mankind may be two generations hence, no living mortal can tell. The worshippers of intellect may attempt to reverse or modify the judgment already passed; but the impressive truth remains that no man, however great his genius, will be permanently judged aside from character. When Lord Bacon left his name and

memory to men's charitable judgments and the next age, he probably had in view his invaluable legacy to mankind of earnest searchings after truth, which made him one of the greatest of human benefactors. How far the poetry of Byron has proved a blessing to the world must be left to an abler critic than I lay claim to be. In him the good and evil went hand in hand in the eternal warfare which ancient Persian sages saw between the powers of light and darkness in every human soul, — a consciousness of which warfare made Byron himself in his saddest hours wish he had never lived at all.

If we could, in his life and in his works, separate the evil from the good, and let only the good remain, — then his services to literature could hardly be exaggerated, and he would be honored as the greatest English poet, so far as native genius goes, after Shakespeare and Milton.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

1795–1881.

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY.

THE now famous biography of Thomas Carlyle, by Mr. Froude, shed a new light on the eccentric Scotch essayist, and in some respects changed the impressions produced by his own "Reminiscences" and the Letters of his wife. It is with the aid of those two brilliant and interesting volumes on Carlyle's "Earlier Life" and "Life in London," issued about two years after the death of their distinguished subject, that I have rewritten my own view of one of the most remarkable men of the nineteenth century.

Of the men of genius who have produced a great effect on their own time, there is no one concerning whom such fluctuating opinions have prevailed within forty years as in regard to Carlyle. His old admirers became his detractors, and those who first disliked him became his friends. When his earlier works appeared they attracted but little general notice,

though there were many who saw in him a new light, or a new power to brush away cobwebs and shams, and to exalt the spiritual and eternal in man over all materialistic theories and worldly conventionalities.

Carlyle's "Miscellanies" — essays published first in the leading Reviews, when he lived in his moorland retreat — created enthusiasm among young students and genuine thinkers of every creed. Lord Jeffrey detected the new genius and gave him a lift. Carlyle's "French Revolution" took the world by surprise, and established his fame. His "Oliver Cromwell" modified and perhaps changed the opinions of English and American people respecting the Great Protector. It was then that his popularity was greatest, and that the eccentric genius of Cheyne Row, so long struggling with poverty, was assured of a competence, and was received in some of the proudest families of the kingdom as a teacher and a sage. Thus far he was an optimist, taking cheerful views of human life, and encouraging those who had noble aspirations.

But for some unaccountable reason, whether from discontent or dyspepsia or disappointment, or disgust with this world, Carlyle gradually became a pessimist, and attacked all forms of philanthropy, thus alienating those who had been his warmest supporters. He grew more bitter and morose, until

at last he howled almost like a madman, and was steeped in cynicism and gloom. He put forth the doctrine that might was right, and that thrones belong to the strongest. He saw no reliance in governments save upon physical force, and expressed the most boundless contempt for all institutions established by the people. Then he wrote his "Frederic the Great," — his most ambitious and elaborate production, received as an authority from its marvellous historical accuracy, but not so generally read as his "French Revolution," and not, like his "Cromwell," changing the opinions of mankind.

Soon after this the death of his wife plunged him into renewed gloom, from which he never emerged; and he virtually retired from the world, and was lost sight of by the younger generation, until his "Reminiscences" appeared, injudiciously published at his request by his friend and pupil Froude, in which his scorn and contempt for everybody and everything turned the current of public opinion strongly against him. This was still further increased when the Letters of his wife appeared.

Carlyle's bitterest assailants were now agnostics of every shade and degree, especially of the humanitarian school, — that to which Mill and George Eliot belonged. It was seen that this reviler of hypocrisy and shams, this disbeliever in miracles and in mech-

anisms to save society, was after all a believer in God Almighty and in immortality; a stern advocate of justice and duty, appealing to the conscience of mankind; a man who detested Comte the positivist as much as he despised Mill the agnostic, and who exalted the old religion of his fathers, stripped of supernaturalism, as the only hope of the world. The biography by Froude, while it does not conceal the atrabilious temperament of Carlyle, his bad temper, his intense egotism, his irritability, his overweening pride, his scorn, his profound loneliness and sorrow, and the deep gloom into which he finally settled, made clear at the same time his honest and tender nature, his noble independence, his heroic struggles with poverty of which he never complained, his generous charities, his conscientiousness and allegiance to duty, his constant labors amid disease and excessive nervousness, and his profound and unvarying love for his wife, although he was deficient in those small attentions and demonstrations of affection which are so much prized by women. If it be asked whether he was happy in his domestic relations, I would say that he was as much so as such a man could be. But it was a physical and moral impossibility that with his ailments and temper he *could* be happy. He was not sent into this world to be happy, but to do a work which only such a man as he could do.

So displeasing, however, were the personal peculiarities of Carlyle that the man can never be popular. This hyperborean literary giant, speaking a Babylonian dialect, smiting remorselessly all pretenders and quacks, and even honest fools, was himself personally a bundle of contradictions, fierce and sad by turns. He was a compound of Diogenes, Jeremiah, and Dr. Johnson: like the Grecian cynic in his contempt and scorn, like the Jewish prophet in his melancholy lamentations, like the English moralist in his grim humor and overbearing dogmatism.

It is unfortunate that we know so much of the man. Better would it be for his fame if we knew nothing at all of his habits and peculiarities. In our blended admiration and contempt, our minds are diverted from the lasting literary legacy he has left, which, after all, is the chief thing that concerns us. The mortal man is dead, but his works live. The biography of a great man is interesting, but his thoughts go coursing round the world, penetrating even the distant ages, modifying systems and institutions. What a mighty power is law! Yet how little do we know or care, comparatively, for lawgivers!

Thomas Carlyle was born in the year 1795, of humble parentage, in an obscure Scotch village. His father was a stone-mason, much respected for doing

good work, and for his virtue and intelligence, — a rough, rugged man who appreciated the value of education. Although kind-hearted and religious, it would seem that he was as hard and undemonstrative as an old-fashioned Puritan farmer, — one of those men who never kiss their children, or even their wives, before people. His mother also was sagacious and religious, and marked by great individuality of character. For these stern parents Carlyle ever cherished the profoundest respect and affection, regularly visiting them once a year wherever he might be, writing to them frequently, and yielding as much to their influence as to that of anybody.

At the age of fourteen the boy was sent to the University of Edinburgh, with but little money in his pocket, and forced to practise the most rigid economy. He did not make a distinguished mark at college, nor did he cultivate many friendships. He was reserved, shy, awkward, and proud. After leaving college he became a school-teacher, with no aptness and much disdain for his calling. It was then that he formed the acquaintance of Edward Irving, which ripened into the warmest friendship of his life. He was much indebted to this celebrated preacher for the intellectual impulse received from him. Irving was at the head of a school at Kircaldy, and Carlyle became his assistant. Both these young men were

ambitious, and aspired to pre-eminence. Like Napoleon at the military school of Brienne, they would not have been contented with anything less, because they were conscious of their gifts; and both attained their end. Irving became the greatest preacher of his day, and Carlyle the greatest writer; but Carlyle had the most self-sustained greatness. Irving was led by the demon of popularity into extravagances of utterance which destroyed his influence. Carlyle, on the other hand, never courted popularity; but becoming bitter and cynical in the rugged road he climbed to fame, he too lost many of his admirers.

In ceasing to be a country schoolmaster, Carlyle did not abandon teaching. He removed to Edinburgh for the study of divinity, and supported himself by giving lessons. He had been destined by his parents to be a minister of the Kirk of Scotland; but at the age of twenty-three he entered upon a severe self-examination to decide whether he honestly believed and could preach its doctrines. Weeks of intense struggle freed him from the intellectual bonds of the kirk, but fastened upon him the chronic disorder of his stomach which embittered his life, and in later years distorted his vision of the world about him. At the recommendation of his friend Irving, then preacher at Hatton Gardens, Carlyle now became private tutor to the son of Mr. Charles Buller,

an Anglo-Indian merchant, on a salary of £200; and the tutor had the satisfaction of seeing his pupil's political advancement as a member of the House of Commons and one of the most promising men in England.

About this time Carlyle, who had been industriously studying German and French, published a translation of Legendre's "Elements of Geometry;" and in 1824 brought out a "Life of Schiller," a work that he never thought much of, but which was a very respectable performance. In fact, he never thought much of any of his works: they were always behind his ideal. He wrote slowly, and took great pains to be accurate; and in this respect he reminds us of George Eliot. Carlyle had no faith in rapid writing of any sort, any more than Daniel Webster had in extempore speaking. After he had become a master of composition, it took him thirteen years of steady work to write "Frederick the Great," — about the same length of time it took Macaulay to write the history of fifteen years of England's life, whereas Gibbon wrote the whole of his voluminous and exhaustive "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" in twenty years.

"Schiller" being finished, Carlyle was now launched upon his life-work as "a writer of books." He translated Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister," for which

he received £180. I do not see the transcendent excellence of this novel, except in its original and forcible criticism, and its undercurrent of philosophy; but it is nevertheless famous. These two works gave Carlyle some literary reputation among scholars, but not much fame.

Although Carlyle was thus fairly embarked on a literary career, the "trade" of literature he always regarded as a poor one, and never encouraged a young man to pursue it as a profession unless forced into it by his own irresistible impulses. Its nobility he ranked very high, but not its remunerativeness. He regarded it as a luxury for the rich and leisurely, but a very thorny and discouraging path for a poor man. How few have ever got a living by it, unless allied with other callings, — as a managing clerk, or professor, or lecturer, or editor! The finest productions of Emerson were originally delivered as lectures. Novelists and dramatists, I think, are the only class, who, without doing anything else, have earned a comfortable support by their writings. Historians have, with very few exceptions, been independent in their circumstances.

In the year 1826, at the age of thirty-one, Carlyle married Jane Welsh, the only child of a deceased physician of Haddington, who had some little property in expectancy from the profits of a farm in the moor-

lands of Scotland. She was beautiful, intellectual, and nervously intense. She had been a pupil of Edward Irving, who had introduced his friend Carlyle to her. On the whole, it was a fortunate marriage for Carlyle, although it would have been impossible for him to have or to give happiness in constant and intimate companionship with any woman. He was very fond of his wife, but in an undemonstrative sort of way, — except in his letters to her, which are genuine love-letters, tender and considerate. As in the case of most superior women, clouds at times gathered over her, which her husband did not or could not dissipate. But she was very proud of him, and faithful to him, and careful of his interest and fame. Nor is there evidence from her letters, or from the late biography which Froude has written, that she was, on the whole, unhappy. She was very frank, very sharp with her tongue, and sometimes did not spare her husband. She had a good deal to put up with from his irritable temper; but she also was irritable, nervous, and sickly, although in her loyalty she rarely complained, while she had many privations to endure, — for Carlyle until he was nearly fifty was a poor man. During the first two years of their residence in London they were obliged to live on £100 a year. He was never in even moderately easy circumstances until after his "Oliver Cromwell" was published.

After his marriage, Carlyle lived eighteen months near Edinburgh; but there was no opening for him in the exclusive society there. His merits were not then recognized as a man of genius in that cultivated capital, as it pre-eminently was at that time; but he made the acquaintance of Jeffrey, who acknowledged his merit, admired his wife, and continued to be as good a friend as that worldly but accomplished man could be to one so far beneath him in social rank.

The next seven years of Carlyle's life were spent at the Scotch moorland farm of Craigenputtock, belonging to his wife's mother, which must have contributed to his support. How any brilliant woman, fond of society as Mrs. Carlyle was, could have lived contentedly in that dreary solitude, fifteen miles from any visiting neighbor or town, is a mystery. She had been delicately reared, and the hard life wore upon her health. Yet it was here that the young couple established themselves, and here that some of the young author's best works were written, — as the "Miscellanies" and "Sartor Resartus." From here it was that he sent forth those magnificent articles on Heyne, Goethe, Novalis, Voltaire, Burns, and Johnson, which, published in the Edinburgh and other Reviews, attracted the attention of the reading world, and excited boundless admiration among students.

The earlier of these remarkable productions, like

those on Burns and Jean Paul Richter, were free from those eccentricities of style which Carlyle persisted in retaining with amazing pertinacity as he advanced in life, — except, again, in his letters to his wife, which are models of clear writing.

The essay on "German Literature" appeared in the same year, 1827, — a longer and more valuable article, a blended defence and eulogium of a *terra incognita*, somewhat similar in spirit to that of Madame de Staël's revelations twenty years before, and in which the writer shows great admiration of German poetry and criticism. Perhaps no Englishman, with the possible exceptions of Julius Hare and Coleridge, — the latter then a broken-down old man, — had at that time so profound an acquaintance as Carlyle with German literature, which was his food and life during the seven years' retirement on his moorland farm. This essay also was comparatively free from the involved, grotesque, but vivid style of his later works; and it was religious in its tone. "It is mournful," writes he, "to see so many noble, tender, and aspiring minds deserted of that light which once guided all such; mourning in the darkness because there is no home for the soul; or, what is worse, pitching tents among the ashes, and kindling weak, earthly lamps which we are to take for stars. But this darkness is very transitory. These ashes are the soil of future herbage and

richer harvests. Religion dwells in the soul of man, and is as eternal as the being of man."

In this extract we see the optimism which runs through Carlyle's earlier writings, — the faith in creation which is to succeed destruction, the immortal hopes which sustain the soul. He believed in the God of Abraham, and was as far from being a scoffer as the heavens are higher than the earth. He had renounced historical Christianity, but he adhered to its essential spirit.

The next article which Carlyle published seems to have been on Werner, followed the same year, 1828, by one on Goethe's "Helena," — a continuation of his "Faust." This transcendent work of German art, which should be studied rather than read, is commented on by the reviewer with boundless admiration. If there was one human being whom Carlyle worshipped it was the dictator of German literature, who reigned at Weimar as Voltaire had reigned at Ferney. If he was not the first to introduce the writings of Goethe into England, he was the great German's warmest admirer. If Goethe had faults, they were to Carlyle the faults of a god, and he exalted him as the greatest light of modern times, — a new force in the world, a new fire in the soul, who inaugurated a new era in literature which went to the heart of cultivated Europe, weary of the doubts and denials that Vol-

taire had made fashionable. It seemed to Carlyle that Goethe entered into the sorrows, the solemn questionings and affirmations of the soul, seeking emancipation from dogmas and denials alike, and, in the spirit of Plato, resting on the certitudes of a higher life, — calm, self-poised, many-sided, having subdued passion as he had outgrown cant; full of benignity, free from sarcasm; a man of mighty and deep experiences, with knowledge of himself, of the world, and the whole realm of literature; a great artist as well as a great genius, seated on the throne of letters, not to scatter thunderbolts, but to instruct the present and future generations.

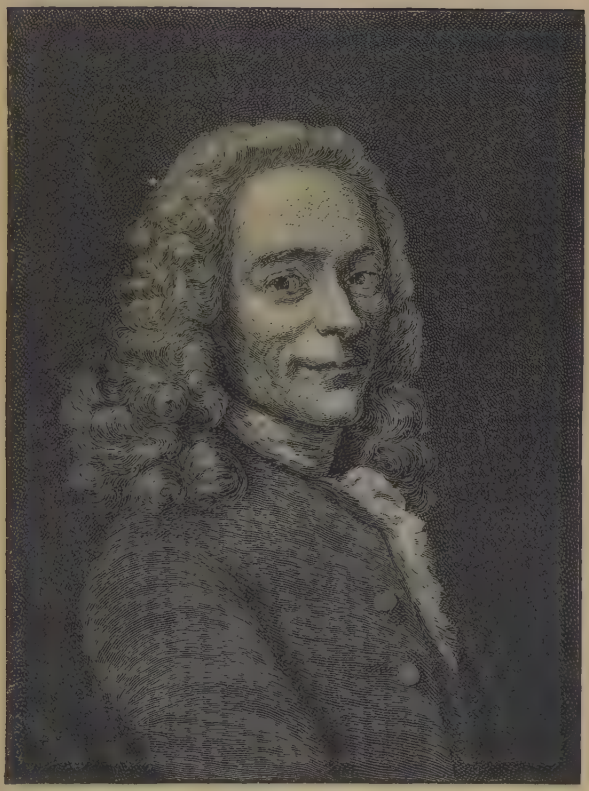
The next great essay which Carlyle published, this time in the Edinburgh Review, was on Burns, — a hackneyed subject, yet treated with masterly ability. This article, in some respects his best, entirely free from mannerisms and affectation of style, is just in its criticism, glowing with eloquence, and full of sympathy with the infirmities of a great poet, showing a remarkable insight into what is noblest and truest. This essay is likely to live for style alone, aside from its various other merits. It is complete, exhaustive, brilliant, such as only a Scotchman could have written who was familiar with the laborious lives of the peasantry, living in the realm of art and truth, careless of outward circumstances and trappings, and exalting

only what is immortal and lofty. While Carlyle sees in Goethe the impersonation of human wisdom, — in every aspect a success, outwardly and inwardly, serene and potent as an Olympian deity, — he sees in Burns a highly gifted genius also, but yet a wreck and a failure; a man broken down by the force of that degrading habit which unfortunately and peculiarly and even mysteriously robs a man of all dignity, all honor, and all sense of shame. Amid the misfortunes, the mistakes, and the degradations of the born poet, whom he alike admires and pities and mildly blames, he sees also the noble elements of the poet's gifted soul, and loves him, especially for his sincerity, which next to labor he uniformly praises. It was the truthfulness he saw in Burns which constrained Carlyle's affection, — the poet's sympathy and humanity, speaking out of his heart in unconscious earnestness and plaintive melody; sad and sorrowful, of course, since his life was an unsuccessful battle with himself, but free from egotism, and full of a love which no misery could crush, — so unlike that other greatest poet of our century, "whose exemplar was Satan, the hero of his poetry and the model of his life." In this most beautiful and finished essay Carlyle paints the man in his true colors, — sinning and sinned against, courageous while yielding, poor but proud, scornful yet affectionate; singing in matchless lyrics the senti-

ments of the people from whom he sprung and among whom he died, which lyrics, though but fragments indeed, are precious and imperishable.

In the same year appeared the Life of Heyne, — the great German scholar, pushing his way from the depths of poverty and obscurity, by force of patient industry and genius, to a proud position and a national fame. "Let no unfriended son of genius despair," exclaims Carlyle. "If he have the will, the power will not be denied him. Like the acorn, carelessly cast abroad in the wilderness, yet it rises to be an oak; on the wild soil it nourishes itself; it defies the tempest, and lives for a thousand years." The whole outward life of Carlyle himself, like that of Heyne, was an example of heroism amid difficulties, and hope amid the storms.

The next noticeable article which Carlyle published was on Voltaire, and appeared in the Quarterly Review in 1829. It would appear that he hoped to find in this great oracle and guide of the eighteenth century something to admire and praise commensurate with his great fame. But vainly. Voltaire, though fortunate beyond example in literary history, versatile, laborious, brilliant in style, — poet, satirist, historian, and essayist, — seemed to Carlyle to be superficial, irreligious, and egotistical. The critic ascribes his power to ridicule, — a Lucian, who destroyed but did not



After the painting by M. Q. de la Tour, Endoxe Marcille collection, Paris

FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET De VOLTAIRE

reconstruct; worldly, material, sceptical, defiant, utterly lacking that earnestness without which nothing permanently great can be effected. Carlyle says: —

"Voltaire read history, not with the eye of a devout seer, or even critic, but through a pair of mere anti-Catholic spectacles. It is not a mighty drama, enacted on the theatre of infinitude, with suns for lamps and eternity as a background, whose author is God and whose purport leads to the throne of God, but a poor, wearisome debating-club dispute, spun through ten centuries, between the Encyclopédie and the Sorbonne."

Carlyle's essays for the next two years, chiefly on German literature, which he admired and sought to introduce to his countrymen, were published in various Reviews. I can only allude to one on Richter, whose whimsicality of style he unconsciously copied, and whose original ideas he made his own. In this essay Carlyle introduced to the English people a great German, but a grotesque, whose writings will probably never be read much out of Germany, excellent as they are, on account of the "jarring combination of parentheses, dashes, hyphens, figures without limit, one tissue of metaphors and similes, interlaced with epigrammatic bursts and sardonic turns, — a heterogeneous, unparalleled imbroglio of perplexity and extravagance." There was another, on Schiller, not an idol to Carlyle as Goethe was, yet a great poet

and a true man, with deep insight and intense earnestness. "His works," said Carlyle, "and the memory of what he was, will arise afar off, like a towering landmark in the solitude of the past, when distance shall have dwarfed into invisibility many lesser people that once encompassed him, and hid them forever from the near beholder."

Thus far Carlyle had confined himself to biography and essays on German literature, in which his extraordinary insight is seen; but now he enters another field, and writes a strictly original essay, called "Characteristics," published in the Edinburgh Review in the prolific year of 1831, in which essay we see the germs of his philosophy. The article is hard to read, and is disfigured by obscurities which leave a doubt on the mind of the reader as to whether the author understood the subject about which he was writing, — for Carlyle was not a philosopher, but a painter and prose-poet. There is no stream of logic running consistently through his writings. In "Characteristics" he seems to have had merely glimpses of great truths which he could not clearly express, and which won him the reputation of being a German transcendentalist. Its leading idea is the commonplace one of the progress of society, which no sane and Christian man has ever seriously questioned, — not an uninterrupted progress, but a general

advance, brought about by Christian ideas. Any other view of progress is dreary and discouraging; nor is this inconsistent with great catastrophes and national backslidings, with the fall of empires, and French Revolutions.

We note at this time in Carlyle's writings, on the whole, a cheerful view of human life in spite of sorrows, hardships, and disappointments, which are made by Divine Providence to act as healthy discipline. We see nothing of the angry pessimism of his later writings. Those years at Craigenputtock were healthy and wholesome; he labored in hope, and had great intellectual and artistic enjoyment, which reconciled him to solitude, — the chief evil with which he had to contend, after dyspepsia. His habits were frugal, but poverty did not stare him in the face, since he had the income of the farm. It does not appear that the deep gloom which subsequently came over his soul oppressed him in his moorland retreat. He did not sympathize with any religion of denials, but felt that out of the jargon of false and pretentious philosophies would come at last a positive belief which would once more enthrone God in the world.

After writing another characteristic article, on Biography, he furnished for Fraser's Magazine one of the finest biographical portraits ever painted, — that of

Dr. Johnson, in which that cyclopean worker stands out, with even more distinctness than in Boswell's "Life," as one of the most honest, earnest, patient laborers in the whole field of literature. Carlyle makes us almost love this man, in spite of his awkwardness, dogmatism, and petulance. Johnson in his day was an acknowledged dictator on all literary questions, surrounded by admirers of the highest gifts, who did homage to his learning, — a man of more striking individuality than any other celebrity in England, and a man of intense religious convictions in an age of religious indifference. We now wonder why this struggling, poorly paid, and disagreeable man of letters should have had such an ascendency over men superior to himself in learning, genius, and culture, as Burke and Gibbon doubtless were. Even Goldsmith, whom he snubbed and loved, is now more popular than he. It was the heroism of his character which Carlyle so much admired and so vividly described, — contending with so many difficulties, yet surmounting them all by his persistent industry and noble aspirations; never losing faith in himself or his Maker, never servilely bowing down to rank and wealth, as others did, and maintaining his self-respect in whatever condition he was placed. In this delightful biography we are made to see the superiority of character to genius, and the dignity

of labor when idleness was the coveted desire of most fortunate men, as well as the almost universal vice of the magnates of the land. Labor, to the mind of Johnson as well as to that of Carlyle, is not only honorable, but is a necessity which Nature imposes as the condition of happiness and usefulness. Nor does Carlyle sneer at the wedded life of Johnson, made up of "drizzle and dry weather," but reverences his fidelity to his best friend, uninteresting as she was to the world, and his plaintive and touching grief when she passed away.

Carlyle in this essay exalts a life of letters, however poorly paid (which Pope in his "Dunciad" did so much to depreciate), showing how it contributes to the elevation of a nation, and to those lofty pleasures which no wealth can purchase. But it is the moral dignity of Johnson which the essay makes to shine most conspicuously in his character, supported as he was by the truths of religion, in which under all circumstances he proudly glories, and without which he must have made shipwreck of himself amid so many discouragements, maladies, and embarrassments, — for his greatest labors were made with poverty, distress, and obscurity for his companions, — until at last, victorious over every external evil and vile temptation, he emerged into the realm of peace and light, and became an oracle and a sage wherever he chose to go.

Johnson was the greatest master of conversation in his day, whose detached sayings are still quoted more often than his most elaborate periods. I apprehend that there was a great contrast between Johnson's writings and his conversation. While the former are Ciceronian, his talk was epigrammatic, terse, and direct; and its charm and power were in his pointed and vehement Saxon style. Had he talked as he wrote, he would have been wearisome and pedantic. Still, like Coleridge and Robert Hall, he preached rather than conversed, thinking what he himself should say rather than paying attention to what others said, except to combat and rebuke them, — a discourser, as Macaulay was; not one to suggest interchange of ideas, as Addison did. But neither power of conversation nor learning would have made Johnson a literary dictator. His power was in the force of his character, his earnestness, and sincerity, even more than in his genius.

I will not dwell on the other Review articles which Carlyle wrote in his isolated retreat, since published as "Miscellanies," on which his fame in no small degree rests, — even as the essays of Macaulay may be read when his more elaborate History will lie neglected on the shelves of libraries. Carlyle put his soul into these miscellanies, and the labor and enjoyment of writing made him partially forget his

ailments. I look upon those years at Craigenputtock as the brightest and healthiest of his life, removed as he was from the sight of levities and follies which tormented his soul and irritated his temper.

Carlyle contrived to save about £200 from his literary earnings, so frugal was his life and so free from temptations. His recreation was in wandering on foot or horseback over the silent moors and unending hills, watered by nameless rills and shadowed by mists and vapors. His life was solitary, but not more so than that of Moses amid the deserts of Midian, — isolation, indeed, but in which the highest wisdom is matured. Into this retreat Emerson penetrated, a young man, with boundless enthusiasm for his teacher, — for Carlyle was a teacher to him as to hundreds of others in this country. Carlyle never had a truer and better friend than Emerson, who opened to him the great reward of recognition in distant America while yet his own land refused to take knowledge of him; and this friendship continued to the end, an honor to both, — for Carlyle never saw in Emerson's writings the genius and wisdom which his American friend admired in the Scottish sage. Nor were their opinions so harmonious as some suppose. Emerson despised Calvinism, and had no definite opinions on any theological subject; Carlyle was a Calvinist without the the-

ology of Calvinism, if that be possible. He did not, indeed, believe in historical Christianity, but he had the profoundest convictions of an overruling God, reigning in justice, and making the wrath of man to praise Him. Carlyle, too, despised everything visionary and indefinite, and had more respect for what is brought about by revolution than by evolution. But of all things he held in profoundest abhorrence the dreary theories of materialists and political economists. It was the spirit and not the body which stood out in his eyes as of most importance; it was the manly virtues which he reverenced in man, not his clothes and surroundings. And it was on this lofty spiritual plane that Carlyle and Emerson stood in complete harmony together.

I cannot quit this part of Carlyle's life without mention of what I conceive to be his most original and remarkable production, — "Sartor Resartus," — The Stitcher Restitched: or, The Tailor Done Over, — the title of an old Scotch song. It is a quaintly conceived reproduction of the work of an imaginary German professor on "The Philosophy of Clothes," — under which external figure he includes all institutions, customs, beliefs, in which humanity has draped itself, as distinguished from the inner reality of man himself. "The beginning of all Wisdom," he says, "is to look fixedly on Clothes, or even with armed

eyesight, till they become *transparent.*" And thus, in grotesque fashion, with amazing vigor he ranges the universe in search of the Real. In one of his letters to Emerson, Carlyle, discussing a project of lecturing in America, takes on his sartorial professor's name, and writes: "Could any one but appoint me Lecturing Professor of Teufelsdröckh's Science, — 'Things in General'!" This work was written in his remote solitude, yet not published for years after it was finished, — and for the best of reasons, because with all his literary repute Carlyle could not find a publisher. The "Sartor" was not appreciated; and Carlyle, knowing its value, locked it up in his drawer, and waited for his time.

The "Sartor Resartus" is a sort of prose poem, written with the heart's blood, vivid as fire in a dark night; a Dantean production; a revelation probably of the author's own struggles and experiences from the dark gulf of the "Everlasting Nay" to the clear and serene heights of the "Everlasting Yea." To me the book is full of consolation and encouragement, — a battle of the spirit with infernal doubts, a victory over despair, over all external evils and all spiritual foes. It is also a bold and grotesque but scorching sarcasm of the conventionalities and hypocrisies of society, and a savage thrust at those quackeries which seem to reign in this world in

spite of their falsity and shallowness. It is not, I grant, easy to read. It is full of conceits and affectations of style, — a puzzle to some, a rebuke to others. "Every page of this unique collection of confessions and meditations, of passionate invective and solemn reflection," is stamped with the seal of genius, and yet was the last of Carlyle's writings to be appreciated. I believe that this is the ordinary fate of truly original works, those that are destined to live the longest, especially if they burn no incense to the idols of prevailing worship, and be characterized by a style which, to say the least, is extraordinary. Flashy, brilliant, witty, yet superficial pictures of external life which everybody has seen and knows, are the soonest to find admirers; but a revelation of what is not seen, this is the work of seers and prophets whose ordinary destiny has been anything other than to wear soft raiment and sit in king's palaces. The "Sartor" was at last, in 1833–1834, printed in Fraser's Magazine, meeting no appreciation in England, but very enthusiastically received by Emerson, Channing, Ripley, and a group of advanced thinkers in New England, through whose efforts it was published here in book form. And so, in spite of timid London publishers, it drifted back to London and a slow-growing fame. In our time, sixty years later, it sells by scores of thousands annually, in cheap and in

luxurious editions, throughout the English-speaking world.

In respect of early recognition and popularity, Carlyle differs from his great contemporary Macaulay, who was so immediately and so magnificently rewarded, and yet received no more than his due as the finest prose writer of his day. Macaulay's Essays are generally word-pictures of remarkable men and remarkable events, but of men of action rather than of quiet meditation. His heroes are such men as Clive and Hastings and Pitt, not such men as Pascal or Augustine or Leibnitz or Goethe. But Carlyle in his heroes paints the struggling soul in its deepest aspirations, and the truths evolved by profound meditations. These are not such as gain instant popular acceptance; yet they are the longer-lived.

The time came at last for Carlyle to leave his retirement among moors and hills, and in 1831 he directed his steps to London, spending the winter with his wife in the great centre of English life and thought, and being well received; so that in 1834 he removed permanently to the metropolis. But he was scarcely less buried at his modest house in Chelsea than he had been on his farm, for he came to London with only £200, and was obliged to practise the most rigid economy. For two years he

labored in his London workshop without earning a shilling, and with a limited acquaintance. Not yet was his society sought by the great world which he mocked and despised. He fortunately had the genial and agreeable Leigh Hunt for a neighbor, and Edward Irving for his friend. He was known to the critics by his writings, but his circle of personal friends was small. He was more or less intimate with John Stuart Mill, Charles Austin, Sir William Molesworth, and the advanced section of the philosophical radicals, — the very class of men from whom he afterwards was most estranged. None of these men forwarded his fortunes; but they lent him books, and helped him at the libraries, for no carpenter can work without tools.

The work to which Carlyle now devoted himself was a history of the French Revolution, the principal characters of which he had already studied and written about. It was a subject adapted to his genius for dramatic writing, and for the presentation of his views as to retribution. His whole theology, according to Froude, was underlaid by the belief in punishment for sin, which was impressed upon his mind by his God-fearing parents, and was one of his firmest convictions. The French were to his mind the greatest sinners among Christian nations, and therefore were to reap a fearful penalty. To paint in a new and

impressive form the inevitable calamities attendant on violated law and justice, was the aspiration of Carlyle. He had money enough to last him with economy for two years. In this time he hoped to complete his work. The possibility was due to the intelligent thrift of his wife. Commenting on one of her letters describing their snug little house, he writes: —

"From birth upwards she had lived in opulence; and now, for my sake, had become poor, — so nobly poor. Truly, her pretty little brag [in this letter] was well founded. No such house, for beautiful thrift, quiet, spontaneous, nay, as it were, unconscious — minimun of money reconciled to human comfort and human dignity — have I anywhere looked upon."

He devoted himself to his task with intense interest, and was completely preoccupied.

In the winter of 1835, after a year of general study, collection of material and writing, and at last "by dint of continual endeavor for many weary weeks," the first volume was completed and submitted to his friend Mill. The valuable manuscript was accidentally and ignorantly destroyed by a servant, and Mill was in despair. Carlyle bore the loss like a hero. He did not chide or repine. If his spirit sunk within him, it was when he was alone in his library or in the society of his sympathizing wife. He generously writes to Emerson, —

"I could not complain, or the poor man would have shot himself: we had to gather ourselves together, and show a smooth front to it, — which happily, though difficult, was not impossible to do. I began again at the beginning, to such a wretched, paralyzing torpedo of a task as my hand never found to do."

Mill made all the reparation possible. He gave his friend £200, but Carlyle would accept only £100. Few men could have rewritten with any heart that first volume: it would be almost impossible to revive sufficient interest; the precious inspiration would have been wanting. Yet Carlyle manfully accomplished his task, and I am inclined to think that the second writing was better than the first; that he probably left out what was unessential, and made a more condensed narrative, — a more complete picture, for his memory was singularly retentive. I do not believe that any man can do his best at the first heat. See how the great poets revise and rewrite. Brougham rewrote his celebrated peroration on the trial of Queen Caroline seventeen times. Carlyle had to rewrite his book, but his materials remained; his great pictures were all in his mind. In this second writing there may have been less emotion, — less fire in his descriptions; but there was fire enough, for his vivacity was excessive. Even *his* work could be pruned, not by others, but by himself. "The household at Chelsea was never closer drawn together than in those times

of trial." Carlyle lost time and spirits, but he could afford the loss. The entire work was delayed, but was done at last. The final sentence of Vol. III. was written at ten o'clock on a damp evening, January 14, 1837.

This great work, the most ambitious and famous of all Carlyle's writings, and in many respects his best, was not received by the public with the enthusiam it ought to have awakened. It was not appreciated by the people at large. "Ordinary readers were not enraptured by the Iliad swiftness and vividness of the narrative, its sustained passion, the flow of poetry, the touches of grandeur and tenderness, and the masterly touches by which he made the great actors stand out in their individuality." It seemed to many to be extravagant, exaggerated, at war with all the "feudalities of literature." Partisans of all kinds were offended. The style was startlingly broken, almost savage in strength, vivid and distinct as lightning. Doubtless the man himself had grown away from the quieter moods of his earlier essays. Froude quotes this from Carlyle's journal: "The poor people seem to think a style can be put off or on, not like a skin but like a coat. Is not a skin verily a product and close kinsfellow of all that lies under it, exact type of the nature of the beast, not to be plucked off without flaying and death? The Public is an old woman. Let her maunder and mumble."

But the extraordinary merits of the book made a great impression on the cultivated intellects of England, — such men as Jeffrey, Macaulay, Southey, Hallam, Brougham, Thackeray, Dickens, — who saw and admitted that a great genius had arisen, whether they agreed with his views or not. In America, we may be proud to say, the work created general enthusiasm, and its republication through Emerson's efforts brought some money as well as larger fame to its author. Of the first moneys that Emerson sent Carlyle as fruits of this adventure, the dyspeptic Scotchman wrote that he was "half-resolved to buy myself a sharp little nag with twenty of these trans-Atlantic pounds, and ride him till the other thirty be eaten. I will call the creature 'Yankee.' . . . My kind friends!" And *Yankee* was duly bought and ridden.

Carlyle still remained in straitened circumstances, although his reputation was now established. In order to assist him in his great necessities his friends got up lectures for him, which were attended by the *élite* of London. He gave several courses in successive years during the London season, which brought him more money than his writings at that time, gave him personal *éclat*, and added largely to his circle of admirers. His second course of twelve lectures brought him £300, — a year's harvest, and a

large sum for lectures in England, where the literary institutions rarely paid over £5 for a single lecture. Even in later times the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, which commanded the finest talent, paid only £10 to such men as Froude and the archbishop of York.

But lecturing, to many men an agreeable excitement, seems to have been very unpleasant to Carlyle, — even repulsive. Though the lectures brought both money and fame, he abominated the delivery of them. They broke his rest, destroyed his peace of mind, and depressed his spirits. Nothing but direst necessity reconciled him to the disagreeable task. He never took any satisfaction or pride in his success in this field; nor was his success probably legitimate. People went to see him as a new literary lion, — to hear him roar, not to be edified. He had no peculiar qualification for public speaking, and he affected to despise it. Very few English men of letters have had this gift. Indeed, popular eloquence is at a discount among the cultivated classes in England. They prefer to read at their leisure. Popular eloquence best thrives in democracies, as in that of ancient Athens; aristocrats disdain it, and fear it. In their contempt for it they even affect hesitation and stammering, not only when called upon to speak in public, but also in social converse, until the halting style has come to

be known among Americans as "very English." In absolute monarchies eloquence is rare except in the pulpit or at the bar. Cicero would have had no field, and would not probably have been endured, in the reign of Nero; yet Bossuet and Bourdaloue were the delight of Louis XIV. What would that monarch have said to the speeches of Mirabeau?

After the publication in 1837 of the "French Revolution," — that "roaring conflagration of anarchies," that series of graphic pictures rather than a history or even a criticism, — it was some time before Carlyle could settle down upon another great work. He delivered lectures, wrote tracts and essays, gave vent to his humors, and nursed his ailments. He was now famous, — a man whom everybody wished to see and know, especially Americans when they came to London, but whom he generally snubbed (as he did me) and pronounced them bores. It was at this time that he made the acquaintance of Monckton Milnes, afterward Lord Houghton, who invited him to breakfast, where he met other notabilities, — among them Bunsen the Prussian Ambassador at London; Lord Mahon the historian; and Mr. Baring, afterward Lord Ashburton, the warmest and the truest of his friends, who extended to him the most generous hospitalities.

Carlyle was now in what is called "high society," and was "taking life easy," — writing but little, yet reading much, especially about Oliver Cromwell, whose Life he thought of writing. His lectures at this period were more successful than ever, attended by great and fashionable people; and from them his chief income was derived.

While collecting materials for his Life of Cromwell, Carlyle became deeply interested in the movements of the Chartists, composed chiefly of workingmen with socialistic tendencies. He was called a "radical," — and he did believe in a radical reform of men's lives, especially of the upper classes who showed but little sympathy for the poor. He was not satisfied with the Whigs, who believed that the Reform Bill would usher in a political millennium. He had more sympathy with the "conservative" Tories than the "liberal" Whigs; but his opinions were not acceptable to either of the great political parties. They alike distrusted him. Even Mill had a year before declined an article on the working classes for his Review, the Westminster. Carlyle took it to Lockhart of the Quarterly, but Lockhart was afraid to publish it. Mill, then about to leave the Westminster, wished to insert it as a final shout; but Carlyle declined, and in 1839 expanded his article into a book called "Chartism," which was rapidly sold and

loudly noticed. It gave but little satisfaction, however. It offended the conservatives by exposing sores that could not be healed, while on the other hand the radicals did not wish to be told that men were far from being equal, — that in fact they were very unequal; and that society could not be advanced by debating clubs or economical theories, but only by gifted individuals as instruments of Divine Providence, guiding mankind by their superior wisdom.

These views were expanded in a new course of lectures, on "Heroes and Hero Worship," and subsequently printed, — the most able and suggestive of all Carlyle's lectures, delivered in the spring of 1840 with great *éclat*. He never appeared on the platform again. Lecturing, as we have said, was not to his taste; he preferred to earn his living by his pen, and his writings had now begun to yield a comfortable support. He received on account of them £400 from America alone, thanks to the influence of his friend Emerson.

Carlyle now began to weary of the distraction of London life, and pined for the country. But his wife would not hear a word about it; she had had enough of the country, at Craigenputtock. Meanwhile preparations for the Life of Cromwell went on slowly, varied by visits to his relatives in Scotland, travels on the Continent, and interviews with distinguished men.

His mind at this period (1842) was most occupied with the sad condition of the English people, — everywhere riots, disturbances, physical suffering and abject poverty among the masses, for the Corn Laws had not then been repealed; and to Carlyle's vision there was a most melancholy prospect ahead, — not revolution, but universal degradation, and the reign of injustice. This sad condition of the people was contrasted in his mind with what it had been centuries before, as it appeared from an old book which he happened to read, Jocelin's Chronicles, which painted English life in the twelfth century. He fancied that the world was going on from bad to worse; and in this gloomy state of mind he wrote his "Past and Present," which appeared in 1843, and created a storm of anger as well as admiration. It was a sort of protest against the political systems of economy then so popular. Lockhart said of it that he could accept none of his friend's inferences except one, — "that we were all wrong, and were all like to be damned."

Gloomy and satirical as the book was, it made a great impression on the thinkers of the day, while it did not add to the author's popularity. It seemed as if he were a prophet of wrath, — an Ishmaelite whose hand was against everybody. He offended all political parties, — "the Tories by his radicalism, and the Radicals by his scorn of their formulas; the High Church-

man by his Protestantism, and the Low Churchman by evident unorthodoxy." Yet all parties and sects admitted that much that he said was true, while at the same time they had no sympathy with his fierce ravings.

For ten years after the publication of the "French Revolution" Carlyle assumed the functions of a prophet, hurling anathemas and pronouncing woes. To his mind everything was alike disjointed or false or pretentious, in view of which he uttered groans and hisses and maledictions. The very name of a society designed to ameliorate evils seemed to put him into a passion. Every reformer appeared to him to be a blind teacher of the blind. Exeter Hall, then the scene of every variety of social and religious and political discussion, was to him a veritable pandemonium. Everybody at that period of agitation and reform was giving lectures, and everybody went to hear them; and Carlyle ridiculed them all alike as pedlers of nostrums to heal diseases which were incurable. He lived in an atmosphere of disdain. "The English people," said he, "number some thirty millions, — mostly fools." His friends expostulated with him for giving utterance to such bitter expressions, and for holding such gloomy views. John Mill was mortally offended, and walked no more with him. De Quincey said, "You have made a new hole in your society kettle: how do you propose to mend it?"

Yet all this while Carlyle had not lost faith in Providence, as it might seem, but felt that God would inflict calamities on peoples for their sins. He resembled Savonarola more than he did Voltaire. What seemed to some to be mockeries were really the earnest protests of his soul against universal corruption, to be followed by downward courses and retribution. His mind was morbid from intense reflection on certain evils, and from his physical ailments. He doubtless grieved and alienated his best friends by his diatribes against popular education and free institutions. He even appeared to lean to despotism and the rule of tyrants, provided only they were strong.

Thus Carlyle destroyed his influence, even while he moved the mind to reflection. It was seen and felt that he had no sympathy with many movements designed to benefit society, and that he cherished utter scorn for many active philanthropists. In his bitterness, wrath, and disdain he became himself intolerant. In some of his wild utterances he brought upon himself almost universal reproach, as when he said, "I never thought the rights of negroes worth much discussing, nor the rights of man in any form," — a sentiment which militated against his whole philosophy. In this strange and unhappy mood of mind, the "Latter Day Pamphlets," "Past and Present," and other essays were written, which undermined the

reverence in which he had been held. These were the blots on his great career, which may be traced to sickness and a disordered mind.

In fact, Carlyle cannot be called a sound writer at any period. He contradicts himself. He is a great painter, a prose-poet, a satirist, — not a philosopher; perhaps the most suggestive writer of the nineteenth century, often giving utterance to the grandest thoughts, yet not a safe guide at all times, since he is inconsistent and full of exaggerations.

The morbid and unhealthy tone of Carlyle's mind at this period may be seen by an extract from one of his letters to Sterling: —

"I see almost nobody. I avoid sight, rather, and study to consume my own smoke. I wish you would build me, among your buildings, some small Prophet Chamber, fifteen feet square, with a flue for smoking, sacred from all noises of dogs, cocks, and piano-fortes, engaging some dumb old woman to light a fire for me daily, and boil some kind of a kettle."

Thus quaintly he expressed his desire for uninterrupted solitude, where he could work to advantage.

He was then engaged on Cromwell, and the few persons with whom he exchanged letters show how retired was his life. His friends were also few, although he could have met as many persons as pleased him. He was too much absorbed with work

to be what is called a society man; but what society he did see was of the best.

At last Carlyle's task on the "Life of Oliver Cromwell" was finished in August, 1845, when he was fifty years of age. It was the greatest contribution to English history, Mr. Froude thinks, which has been made in the present century. "Carlyle was the first to make Cromwell and his age intelligible to mankind." Indeed, he reversed the opinions of mankind respecting that remarkable man, which was a great accomplishment. No one doubts the genuineness of the portrait. Cromwell was almost universally supposed, fifty years ago, to be a hypocrite as well as a usurper. In Carlyle's hands he stands out visionary, perhaps, but yet practical, sincere, earnest, God-fearing, — a patriot devoted to the good of his country. Carlyle rescued a great historical personage from the accumulated slanders of two centuries, and did his work so well that no hostile criticisms have modified his verdict. He has painted a picture which is immortal. The insight, the sagacity, the ability, and the statesmanship of Cromwell are impressed upon the minds of all readers. That England never had a greater or more enlightened ruler, everybody is now forced to admit, — and not merely a patriotic but a Christian ruler, who regarded himself simply as the instrument of Providence.

People still differ as to the cause in which Cromwell embarked, and few defend the means he used to accomplish his ends. He does not stand out as a perfect man; he made mistakes, and committed political crimes which can be defended only on grounds of expediency. But his private life was above reproach, and he died in the triumph of Christian faith, after having raised his country to a higher pitch of glory than had been seen since the days of Queen Elizabeth.

The faults of the biographer centre in confounding right with might; and this conspicuously false doctrine is the leading defect of the philosophy of Carlyle, runs through all his writings, and makes him an unsound teacher. If this doctrine be true, then all the usurpers of the world from Cæsar to Napoleon can be justified. If this be true, then an irresistible imperialism becomes the best government for mankind. It is but fair to say that Carlyle himself denied this inference. Writing of Lecky's having charged him with believing in the divine right of strength, he says: —

"With respect to that poor heresy of might being the symbol of right 'to a certain great and venerable author,' I shall have to tell Lecky one day that quite the converse or *re*verse is the great and venerable author's real opinion, — namely, that right is the eternal

symbol of might; . . . in fact, he probably never met with a son of Adam more contemptuous of might except when it rests on the above origin."

Yet the impression of all his strongest work is the other way.

Certain other kindred doctrines may be inferentially drawn from Carlyle's defence of Cromwell; namely, that a popular assembly is incapable of guiding successfully the destinies of a nation; that behind all constitutions lies an ultimate law of force; that majorities, as such, have no more right to rule than kings and nobles; that the strongest are the best, and the best are the strongest; that the right to rule lies with those who are right in mind and heart, as he supposed Cromwell to be, and who can execute their convictions. Such teachings, it need not be shown, are at war with the whole progress of modern society and the enlightened opinion of mankind.

The great merit of Carlyle's History is in the clearness and vividness with which he paints his hero, and the exposure of the injustice with which he has been treated by historians. It is an able vindication of Cromwell's character. But the deductions drawn from his philosophy lead to absurdity, and are an insult to the understanding of the world.

It was about this time, on the conclusion of the "Cromwell," when he was on the summit of his lite-

rary fame, and the world began to shower its favors upon him, that Carlyle's days were saddened by a domestic trouble which gave him inexpressible solicitude and grief. His wife, with whom he had lived happily for so many years, was exceedingly disturbed on account of his intimate friendship with Lady Ashburton. Nothing can be more plaintive and sadly beautiful than the letters he wrote to her on the occasion of her starting off in a fit of spleen, after a stormy scene, to visit friends at a distance; and what is singular is that we do not find in those letters, when his soul was moved to its very depths, any of his peculiarities of style. They are remarkably simple as well as serious.

Carlyle's friendship for one of the most brilliant and cultivated women of England, which the breath of scandal never for a moment assailed, was reasonable and natural, and was a great comfort to him. He persisted in enjoying it, knowing that his wife disliked it. In this matter, which was a cloud upon his married life, and saddened the family hearth for years, Mrs. Carlyle was doubtless exacting and unreasonable; though some men would have yielded the point for the sake of a faithful wife, — or even for peace. There are those who think that Carlyle was selfish in keeping up an intercourse which was hateful to his wife; but the Ashburtons were the

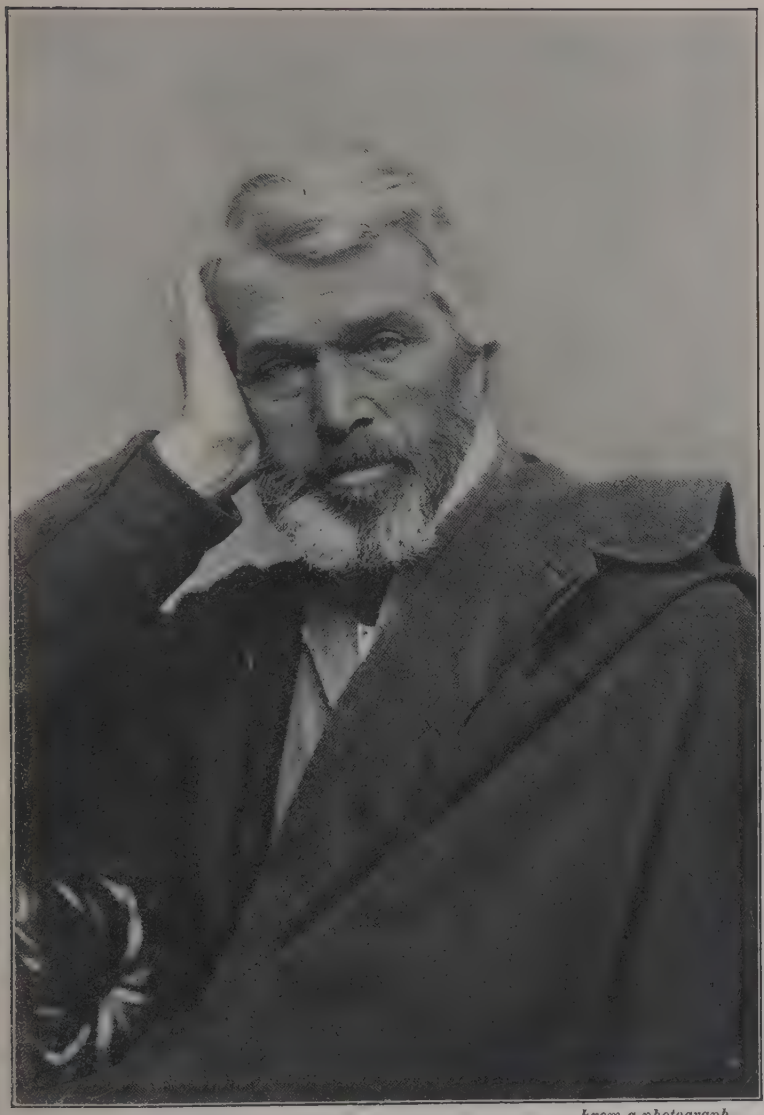
best friends that Carlyle ever had, after he became famous, — and in their various country seats he enjoyed a hospitality rarely extended to poor literary men. There he met in enjoyable and helpful intercourse, when he could not have seen them in his own house, some of the most distinguished men of the day, — men of rank and influence as well as those of literary fame.

Until this intimacy with the Ashburtons, no domestic disturbances of note had taken place in the Carlyle household. The wife may occasionally have been sad and lonely when her husband was preoccupied with his studies; but this she ought to have anticipated in marrying a literary man whose only support was from his pen. Carlyle, too, was an inveterate smoker, and she detested tobacco, so that he did not spend as much time in the parlor as he did in his library, where he could smoke to his heart's content. On the whole, however, their letters show genuine mutual affection, and as much connubial happiness as is common to most men and women, with far more of intimate intellectual and spiritual congeniality. Carlyle, certainly, in all his letters, ever speaks of his wife with admiration and gratitude. He regarded her as not only the most talented woman that he had ever known, but as the one without whom he was miserable. They were the best of

comrades and companions from first to last, when at home together.

For a considerable period after the publication of the Life of Cromwell, Carlyle was apparently idle. He wrote for several years nothing of note except his "Latter Day Pamphlets" (1850), and a Life of his friend John Sterling (1851), to whom he was tenderly attached. It would seem that he was now in easy circumstances, although he retained to the end his economical habits. He amused himself with travelling, and with frequent visits to distinguished people in the country. If not a society man, he was much sought; he dined often at the tables of the great, and personally knew almost every man of note in London. He sturdily took his place among distinguished men, — the intellectual peer of the greatest. He often met Macaulay, but was not intimate with him. I doubt if they even exchanged visits. The reason for this may have been that they were not congenial to each other in anything, and that the social position of Macaulay was immeasurably higher than Carlyle's. It would be hard to say which was the greater man.

It was not until 1852 or 1853, when Carlyle was fifty-eight, that he seriously set himself to write his Life of Frederic II., his last great work, on which



From a photograph

THOMAS CARLYLE

he perseveringly labored for thirteen years. It is an exhaustive history of the Prussian hero, and is regarded in Germany as the standard work on that great monarch and general. The first volume came out in 1858, and the last in 1865. It is a marvel of industry and accuracy, — the most elaborate of all his works, but probably the least read because of its enormous length and scholastic pedantries. It might be said to bear the same relation to his "French Revolution" that "Romola" does to "Adam Bede." In this book Carlyle made no new revelations, as he did in his Life of Cromwell. He did not change essentially the opinion of mankind. Frederick the Great, in his hands, still stands out as an unscrupulous public enemy, — a robber and a tyrant. His crimes are only partially redeemed by his heroism, especially when Europe was in arms against him. There is the same defect in this great work that there is in the Life of Cromwell, — the inculcation of the doctrine that might makes right; that we may do evil that good may come, — thus putting expediency above eternal justice, and palliating crimes because of their success. It is difficult to account for Carlyle's decline in moral perceptions, when we consider that his personal life was so far above reproach.

Although the Life of Frederick is a work of transcendent industry, it did not add to Carlyle's popu-

larity, which had been undermined by his bitter attacks on society in his various pamphlets. At this period he was still looked up to with reverence as a great intellectual giant; but that love for him which had been felt by those who were aroused to honest thinking by his earlier writings had passed away. A new generation looked upon him as an embittered and surly old man. His services were not forgotten, but he was no longer a favorite, — no longer an inspiring guide. His writings continued to stimulate thought, but were no longer regarded as sound. Commonplace people never did like him, probably because they never understood him. His admirers were among the young, the enthusiastic, the hopeful, the inquiring; and when their veneration passed away, there were few left to uphold his real greatness and noble character. One might suppose that Carlyle would have been unhappy to alienate so many persons, especially old admirers. In fact, I apprehend that he cared little for anybody's admiration or flattery. He lived in an atmosphere so infinitely above small and envious and detracting people that he was practically independent of human sympathies. Had he been doomed to live with commonplace persons, he might have sought to conciliate them; but he really lived in another sphere, — not perhaps higher than theirs, but eternally distinct, — in the sphere of abstract

truth. To him most people were either babblers or bores. What did he care for their envious shafts, or even for their honest disapprobation!

Hence, the last days of this great man were not his best days, although he was not without honor. He was made Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh, and delivered a fine address on the occasion; and later, Disraeli, when prime minister, offered him knighthood, with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath and a pension, which he declined. The author of the "Sartor Resartus" did not care for titles. He preferred to remain simply Thomas Carlyle.

While Carlyle was in the midst of honors in Edinburgh, his wife, who had long been in poor health, suddenly died, April 21, 1866. This affliction was a terrible blow to Carlyle, from which he never recovered. It filled out his measure of sorrow, deep and sad, and hard to be borne. His letters after this are full of pathos and plaintive sadness. He could not get resigned to his loss, for his wife had been more and more his staff and companion as years had advanced. The Queen sent her sympathy, but nothing could console him. He was then seventy-one years old, and his work was done. His remaining years were those of loneliness and sorrow and suffering. He visited friends, but they amused him not. He wrote reminiscences, but his isolation remained. He sought out

charities when he himself was the object of compassion,— a sad old man who could not sleep. He tried to interest himself in politics, but time hung heavy on his hands. He read much and thought more, but assumed no fresh literary work. He had enough to do to correct proof-sheets of new editions of his works. His fiercest protests were now against atheism in its varied forms. In 1870, Mr. Erskine, his last Scotch friend, died. In 1873 he writes: "More and more dreary, barren, base, and ugly seem to me all the aspects of this poor, diminishing quack-world, — fallen openly anarchic, doomed to a death which one can wish to be speedy."

Poor old man! He has survived his friends, his pleasures, his labors, almost his fame; he is sick, and weary of life, which to him has become a blank. Pity it is, he could not have died when "Cromwell" was completed. He drags on his forlorn life, without wife or children, and with only a few friends, in disease and ennui and discontent, almost alone, until he is eighty-five.

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps on this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life 's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,

> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

The relief came at last. It was on a cold day in February, 1881, that Lecky, Froude, and Tyndall, alone of his London friends, accompanied his mortal remains to Ecclefechan, where he was buried by the graves of his father and mother. He might have rested in the vaults of Westminster; but he chose to lie in a humble churchyard, near where he was born.

"In future years," says his able and interesting biographer, "Scotland will have raised a monument over his remains; but no monument is needed for one who has made an eternal memorial for himself in the hearts of all to whom truth is the dearest possession.

"'For, giving his soul to the common cause, he won for himself a wreath which will not fade, and a tomb the most honorable, — not where his dust is decaying, but where his glory lives in everlasting remembrance. For of illustrious men all the earth is the sepulchre; and it is not the inscribed column in their own land which is the record of their virtues, but the unwritten memories of them in the hearts and minds of all mankind.'"[1]

[1] Quoted by Froude from the Funeral Oration of Pericles in honor of the Athenians slain during the first summer of the Peloponnesian War, as given by Thucydides, — "their," "they," etc. being changed to "his," "he," etc.

Thomas Carlyle will always have an honorable place among the great men of his time. He was pre-eminently a profound thinker, a severe critic, a great word-painter, — a man of uncommon original gifts, who aroused and instructed his generation. In the literal sense, he was neither philosopher nor poet nor statesman, but a man of genius, who cast his searching and fearless glance into all creeds, systems, and public movements, denouncing hypocrisies, shams, and lies with such power that he lost friends almost as fast as he made them, — without, however, losing the respect and admiration of his literary rivals, or of the ablest and best men both in England and America. Although no believer in the scientific philosophies of our time, he was a great breaker of ground for them, having been a pioneer in the cause of honest thinking and plain speaking. His passion for truth, and courage in declaring his own vision of it, were potent for spiritual liberty. He stands as one of the earliest and stoutest champions of that revolt against authority in religious, intellectual, and social matters which has chiefly marked the Nineteenth Century

LORD MACAULAY.

1800–1859.

ARTISTIC HISTORICAL WRITING.

LORD MACAULAY.

ARTISTIC HISTORICAL WRITING.

AMONG the eminent men of letters of the present century, Thomas Babington Macaulay takes a very high position. In original genius he was inferior to Carlyle, but was greater in learning, in judgment, and especially in felicity of style. He was an historical artist of the foremost rank, the like of whom has not appeared since Voltaire; and he was, moreover, no mean poet, and might have been distinguished as such, had poetry been his highest pleasure and ambition. The same may be said of him as a political orator. Very few men in the House of Commons ever surpassed him in the power of making an eloquent speech. He was too impetuous and dogmatic to be a great debater, like Fox or Pitt or Peel or Gladstone; but he might have reached a more exalted and influential position as a statesman had he confined his remarkable talents to politics.

But letters were the passion of Macaulay, from his youth up; and his remarkably tenacious memory — abnormal, as it seems to me — enabled him to bring his vast store of facts to support plausibly any position he chose to take. At fifty years of age, he had probably read more books than any man in Europe since Gibbon and Niebuhr; he literally devoured everything he could put his hands upon, without cramming for a special object, — especially the Greek and Latin Classics, which he read over and over again, not so much for knowledge as for the pleasure it gave him as a literary critic and a student of artistic excellence.

Macaulay was of Scotch descent, like so many eminent historians, poets, critics, and statesmen who adorned the early and middle part of the nineteenth century, — Scott, Burns, Carlyle, Jeffrey, Dundas, Playfair, Wilson, Napier, Mackintosh, Robertson, Alison; a group of geniuses that lived in Edinburgh, and made its society famous, — to say nothing of great divines and philosophers like Chalmers and Stewart and Hamilton. Macaulay belonged to a good family, the most distinguished members of which were clergymen, — with the exception of his uncle, General Macaulay, who made a fortune in India; and his father, the celebrated merchant and philanthropist, Zachary Macaulay, who did more than any other man, Wilberforce excepted,

to do away with the slave-trade, and to abolish slavery in the West India Islands.

Zachary Macaulay was the most modest and religious of men, and after an eventful life in Africa as governor of the colony of Sierra Leone, settled in Clapham, near London, with a handsome fortune. He belonged to that famous evangelical set who made Clapham famous, and whose extraordinary piety and philanthropy are commemorated by Sir James Stephen in one of his most interesting essays. They resembled in peculiarities the early Quakers and primitive Methodists, and though very narrow were much respected for their unostentatious benevolence, blended with public spirit.

Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, Oct. 25, 1800, but it was at Clapham that his boyhood was chiefly spent. His precocity startled every one who visited his father's hospitable home. At the age of three he would lie at full length on the carpet eagerly reading. He was never seen without an open book in his hands, even during his walks. He cared nothing for the sports of his companions. He could neither ride, nor drive, nor swim, nor row a boat, nor play a game of tennis or foot-ball. He cared only for books of all sorts, which he seized upon with inextinguishable curiosity, and stored their contents in his memory. When a boy, he had learned the

"Paradise Lost" by heart. He did not care to go to school, because it interrupted his reading. Hannah More, a frequent visitor at Clapham and a warm friend of the family, gazed upon him with amazement, but was too wise and conscientious to spoil him by her commendations. At eight years of age he also had great facility in making verses, which were more than tolerable.

Zachary Macaulay objected to his son being educated in one of the great schools in England, like Westminster and Harrow, and he was therefore sent to a private school kept by an evangelical divine who had been a fellow at Cambridge, — a good scholar, but narrow in his theological views. Indeed, Macaulay got enough of Calvinism before he went to college, and was so unwisely crammed with it at home and at school, that through life he had a repugnance to the evangelical doctrines of the Low Church, with which, much to the grief of his father, he associated cant, always his especial abhorrence and disgust. While Macaulay venerated his father, he had little sympathy with his views, and never loved him as he did his own sisters. He did his filial duty, and that was all, — contributed largely to his father's support in later life, treated him with profound respect, but was never drawn to him in affectionate frankness and confidence.

It cannot be disguised that Macaulay was worldly in his turn of mind, intensely practical, and am-

bitious of distinction as soon as he became conscious of his great powers, although in his school-days he was very modest and retiring. He was not religiously inclined, nor at all spiritually minded. An omnivorous reader seldom is narrow, and seldom is profound. Macaulay was no exception. He admired Pascal, but only for his exquisite style and his trenchant irony. He saw little in Augustine except his vast acquaintance with Latin authors. He carefully avoided writing on the Schoolmen, or Calvin, or the great divines of the seventeenth century. Bunyan he admired for his genius and perspicuous style rather than for his sentiments. Even his famous article on Bacon is deficient in spiritual insight; it is a description of the man rather than a dissertation on his philosophy. Macaulay's greatness was intellectual rather than moral; and his mental power was that of the scholar and the rhetorical artist rather than the thinker. In his masterly way of arraying facts he has never been surpassed; and in this he was so skilful that it mattered little which side he took. Like Daniel Webster, he could make any side appear plausible. Doubtless in the law he might have become a great advocate, had he not preferred literary composition instead. Had he lived in the times of the Grecian Sophists, he might have baffled Socrates, — not by his logic, but by his learning and his aptness of illustration.

Macaulay entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1818, being a healthy, robust young man of eighteen, after five years' training in Greek and Latin, having the eldest son of Wilberforce for a school companion. Among his contemporaries and friends at Cambridge were Charles Austin, Praed, Derwent Coleridge, Hyde Villiers, and Romilly; but I infer from his Life by Trevelyan that his circle of intimate friends was not so large as it would have been had he been fitted for college at Westminster or Eton. Nor at this time were his pecuniary circumstances encouraging. After he had obtained his first degree he supported himself, while studying for a fellowship, by taking a couple of pupils for £100 a year. Eventually he gained a fellowship worth £300 a year, which was his main support for seven years, until he obtained a government office in London. He probably would have found it easier to get a fellowship at Oxford than at Cambridge, since mathematics were uncongenial to him, his forte being languages. He was most distinguished at college for English composition and Latin declamation. In 1819 he wrote a poem, "Pompeii," which gained him the chancellor's medal, — a distinction won again in 1821 by a poem on "Evening," while the same year gave him the Craven scholarship for his classical attainments. He took his bachelor's degree in 1822, and was made a fellow of Trinity College. He did not

obtain his fellowship, however, until his third trial, being no favorite with those who had prizes and honors to bestow, because of his neglect of science and mathematics.

As a profession, Macaulay made choice of the law, being called to the bar in 1826, and at Leeds joined the Northern Circuit, of which Brougham was the leading star. But the law was not his delight. He did not like its technicalities. He spent most of his time in his chambers in literary composition, or in the galleries of the House of Commons listening to the debates. He never applied himself seriously to anything which "went against the grain." At Court he got no briefs, but his fellowship enabled him to live by practising economy. He also wrote occasional essays — excellent but not remarkable — for Knight's Quarterly Magazine. It was in this periodical, too, that his early poems were published; but he did not devote much time to this field of letters, although, as we have said, he might undoubtedly have succeeded in it. His poetry, if he had never written anything else, would not be considered much inferior to that of Sir Walter Scott, being full of life and action, and, like most everything else he did, winning him applause. Years later he felt the risk of publishing his "Lays of Ancient Rome;" but as he knew what he could do and what he could not do, or rather what would be

popular, he was not disappointed. The poems were well received, for they were eminently picturesque and vital, as well as strong, masculine, and unadorned; the rhyme and metre were also felicitous. He had no obscurities, and the spirit of his Lays was patriotic and ardent, showing his love of liberty. I think his "Battle of Ivry" is equal to anything that Scott wrote. Yet Macaulay is not regarded by the critics as a true poet; that is, he did not write poetry because he must, like Burns and Byron. His poetry was not spontaneous; it was a manufactured article, — very good of its kind, but not such as to have given him the fame which his prose writings made for him.

It was not, however, until his article on Milton appeared in the Edinburgh Review in 1825, that Macaulay's great career began. Like Byron, he woke up one morning to find himself famous. Everybody read and admired an essay the style of which was new and striking. "Where did you pick up that style?" wrote Jeffrey to the briefless barrister. It transcended in brilliancy anything which had yet appeared in the Edinburgh or Quarterly. Brougham became envious, and treated the rising light with no magnanimity or admiration.

Of course, the author of such an uncommon article as that on Milton, the praise of which was in everybody's mouth, had invitations to dinner from distin-

guished people; and these were most eagerly accepted. Macaulay rapidly became a social favorite, sought for his brilliant conversation, which was as remarkable for a young man of twenty-six as were his writings in the foremost literary journal of the world. He was not handsome, and was carelessly dressed; but he had a massive head, and rugged yet benevolent features, which lighted up with peculiar animation when he was excited. One of the first persons of note to welcome him to her table was Lady Holland, an accomplished but eccentric and plain-spoken woman, who seems to have greatly admired him. He was a frequent guest at Holland House, where for nearly half-a-century the courtly and distinguished Lord Holland and his wife entertained the most eminent men and women of the time. This gratified young Macaulay's inordinate social ambition. He scarcely mentions in his letters at this time any but peers and peeresses.

And yet he did not court the society of those he did not respect. He was not a parasite or a flatterer even of the great, but met them apparently on equal terms, as a monarch of the mind. He was at home in any circle that was not ignorant or frivolous. He was more easy than genial, for his prejudices or intellectual pride made him unkind to persons of mediocrity. It was a bold thing to cross his path,

for he came down like an avalanche on those who opposed him, not so much in anger as in contempt. I do not find that his circle of literary friends was large or intimate. He seldom alludes to Carlyle or Bulwer or Thackeray or Dickens. He has more to say of Rogers and Lord Jeffrey, and other pets of aristocratic circles, — those who were conventionally favored, like Sydney Smith; or those who gave banquets to people of fashion, like Lord Lansdowne. These were the people he loved best to associate with, who listened to his rhetoric with rapt admiration, who did not pique his vanity, and who had something to give to him, — position and *éclat*.

Macaulay was not a vain man, nor even egotistical; but he had a tremendous self-consciousness, which annoyed his equals in literary fame, and repelled such a giant as Brougham, who had no idea of sharing his throne with any one, — being more overbearing even than Macaulay, but more human. This new rival in the Edinburgh Review, of which for a long time Brougham had been dictator, was, much to Jeffrey's annoyance, not convivial. He did not drink two bottles at a sitting, but guarded his health and preserved his simple habits. Though he speaks with gusto of Lord Holland's turtle and turbot and venison and grouse, he was content when alone with a mutton-chop and a few glasses of sherry, or the October ale of Cam-

bridge, which was a part of his perquisites as Fellow. He was very exclusive, in view of the fact that he was a poor man, without aristocratic antecedents or many powerful friends. Outside the class of rank and fashion, his friends' seem to have been leading politicians of the Liberal school, the stanch Whigs who passed the Reform Bill, to whom he was true. To his credit, his happiest hours were spent with his sisters in the quiet seclusion of his father's modest home. All his best letters were to them; and in these he detailed his intercourse with the great, and the splendor of their banquets and balls.

Macaulay's rise, after he had written his famous article on Milton, was rapid. The article itself, striking as it is, must be confessed to be disappointing in so far as it attempted to criticise the "Paradise Lost" and Milton's other poems. Macaulay's genius was historical, not critical; and the essay is notable rather for its review of the times of Charles I. and Archbishop Laud, of the Puritans and the Royalists, than for its literary flavor, except as a brilliant piece of composition. It was, however, the picturesque style of the new writer which was the chief attraction, and the fact that the essay came from so young a man. Macaulay followed the Milton essay with others on Macchiavelli, Dryden, Hallam's "Constitutional History," and on history in general, which displayed to

great advantage his unusual learning, his keen historic instinct, and his splendor of style. He became the most popular contributor to the Edinburgh Review, which was beginning to be dull and heavy; and this kept him before the eyes of politicians and professional men.

Macaulay's ambition was now divided between literature and politics. His first appearance as a public speaker was at an annual anti-slavery convention in London, in 1826, when he made a marked impression. He eagerly embraced the offer of a seat in the House of Commons, which was secured to him in 1830; and as soon as he entered Parliament he began to make speeches, which were carefully composed and probably committed to memory. At a single bound he became one of the leading orators of that renowned assembly. Some of his orations were masterpieces of argument and rhetoric in favor of reform, and of all liberal movements in philanthropy and education. In the opinion of eminent statesmen he was the most "rising" member of the House, and sure to become a leader among the Whigs. But he was poor, having only about £500 a year — the proceeds of his fellowship and his literary productions — to support his dignity as a legislator and meet the calls of society; so that in 1833 he was rewarded with an office in the Board of Control, which regulated the affairs of

India; this doubled his income, and made him independent. But he wanted an office in which he could lay up money for future contingencies. Therefore, in 1834, he gladly resigned his seat in Parliament and accepted the situation of a member of the Supreme Council of India, on a salary of £10,000 a year, £7000 of which he continued to save yearly; so that at the end of four years, when he returned to England, he had become a rich man, or at least independent, with leisure to do whatever he pleased.

In India, as chairman of the Board of Education, as legal adviser of the Council, and in drafting a code of penal laws for that part of the Empire, he was very useful, — although as a matter of fact the new code was too theoretically fine to be practical, and was never put in force. His personal good sense was equal to his industry and his talents, and he preserved his health by strict habits of temperance. Even in that tropical country he presented a strong contrast to the sallow, bilious officials with whom he was surrounded, and in due time returned to England in perfect health, one of the most robust of men, capable of indefinite work, which never seemed to weary him.

But in Calcutta, as in London, he employed his leisure hours in writing for the Edinburgh Review, and gave an immense impulse to its sale, for which

he was amply rewarded. Brougham complained to Jeffrey that his essays took up too much space in the Review, but the politic editor knew what was for its interest and popularity. Macaulay's long articles of sometimes over a hundred pages were received without a murmur; and every article he wrote added to his fame, since he always did his best. His essays in 1830 on Southey and Montgomery, and one in 1831 on Croker's edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, were fierce, scathing onslaughts, even cruel and crushing, — revealing Macaulay's tremendous powers of invective and remorseless criticism, but reflecting little credit on his disposition or his judgment. His Hampden (1831) and his Burleigh (1832) remain among his finest and most inspiring historical paintings. His first essay on Lord Chatham (1834) is a notable piece of characterization; the one on Sir James Mackintosh (1835) is a most acute and brilliant historical criticism; the one on Lord Bacon (1837) is striking and has become famous, but shows Macaulay's deficiency in philosophic thought, besides being sophistical in spirit; and the article on Sir William Temple (1837) — really a history of England during the reign of William III. — is thoroughly fine.

Macaulay's residence in India, so far as political ambition was concerned, may have been a mistake. It withdrew him from an arena in which he could

have risen to great distinction and influence as a parliamentary orator. He might have been a second Fox, whom he resembled in the impetuosity of his rhetoric, if he had also possessed Fox's talents as a debater. Yet he was not a born leader of men. As a parliamentary orator he was simply a speech-maker, like the Unitarian minister Fox, or that still abler man the Quaker Bright, both of whom were great rhetoricians. It is probable that he himself understood his true sphere, which was that of a literary man, — an historical critic, appealing to intelligent people rather than to learned pedants in the universities. His service in India enabled him to write for the remainder of his life with an untrammelled pen, and to live in comfort and ease, enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, to which he attached supreme importance, — so different from Carlyle, who toiled in poverty at Chelsea to declare truth for truth's sake, grumbling, yet lofty in his meditations, the depth of which Macaulay was incapable of appreciating.

It is, then, as a man of letters rather than as a politician that our author merits his exalted fame. Respectable as a member of the House of Commons, or as a jurist in India in compiling a code of laws, yet neither as a statesman nor as a jurist was he in his right place. The leaders of his party may have admired and praised his oratory, but they wanted

something more practical than orations, — they wanted the control of men; and so, too, the government demanded a code which would exact the esteem of lawyers and meet the wants of India rather than a composition which would read well. But as an historical critic and a luminous writer, Macaulay had no superior, — a fact which no one knew better than himself.

In 1838, on his return from India, — where he had regarded himself as in honorable exile, — Macaulay had accumulated a fortune of £30,000, to him more than a competency. This, added to the legacy of £10,000 which he had received from his uncle, General Macaulay, secured to him independence and leisure to pursue his literary work, which was paramount to every other consideration. If both from pleasure and ambition there ever was a man devoted heart and soul and body to a literary career, it was Macaulay. Nor would he now accept any political office which seriously interfered with the passion of his life. Still less would he waste his time at the dinner parties of the great, no longer to him a novelty. He was eminently social by nature, and fond of talk and controversy, with a superb physique capable of digesting the richest dishes, and of enduring the fatigues and ceremonies of fashionable life; but even the pleasures of the banquet and of culti-

vated society, to many a mere relaxation, were sacrificed to his fondness for books, — to him the greatest and truest companionship, especially when they introduced him to the life and manners of by-gone ages, and to communion with the master-minds of the world.

For relaxation, Macaulay preferred to take long walks; lounge around the book-stalls; visit the sights of London with his nieces; invite his intimate friends to simple dinners at The Albany; amuse himself with trifles, especially in company with those he loved best, in the domestic circle of his relatives, whom he treated ever with the most familiar and affectionate sympathy, — so that while they loved and revered him, they had no idea that "Uncle Tom" was a great man. His most interesting letters were to his sisters and nieces, whose amusement and welfare he had constantly in view, and who were more to him than all the world besides. Indeed, he did not write many letters except to his relatives, his publishers, and his intimate friends, who were few, considering the number of persons he was obliged to meet. He was a thoroughly domestic man, although he never married or wished to marry.

It surprises me that Macaulay's intercourse with eminent authors was so constrained, He saw very little of them; but while he did not avoid talking

with them when thrown among them, and keeping up the courtesies of life even with those he thoroughly disliked, I cannot see any evidence that he sought the society of those who were regarded as his equals in genius. He liked Milman and Mackintosh and Napier and Jeffrey and Rogers, and a few others; but his intimate intercourse was confined chiefly to these and to his family.

Macaulay's fame, however, was substantially founded and built. Sydney Smith's witty characterization of him is worth recalling: —

"I always prophesied his greatness from the first moment I saw him, then a very young and unknown man on the Northern Circuit. There are no limits to his knowledge, on small subjects as well as great; he is like a book in breeches.

"Yes, I agree, he is certainly more agreeable since his return from India. His enemies might have said before (though *I* never did so) that he talked rather too much; but now he has occasional flashes of silence that make his conversation perfectly delightful. But what is far better and more important than all this is, that I believe Macaulay to be incorruptible. You might lay ribbons, stars, garters, wealth, title, before him in vain. He has an honest, genuine love of his country; and the world could not bribe him to neglect her interests."

Macaulay now devoted several weeks of every year to travel, visiting different parts of England and the

Continent as the mood took him. In the autumn of 1838 he visited Italy, it would seem for the first time, aud was, of course, enchanted. He appreciated natural scenery, but was not enthusiastic over it; nor did it make a very deep impression on him except for the moment. He loved best to visit cities and places consecrated by classical associations.

While at Rome, Macaulay received from Lord Melbourne the offer of the office of Judge Advocate; but he unhesitatingly declined it. The salary of £2500 was nothing to a scholar who already had a comfortable independence; and the duties the situation imposed were not only uncongenial, but would interfere with his literary labors.

In February, 1839, he returned to London; and now the pressure on him by his political friends to reenter public life was greater than he could resist. He was elected to Parliament as one of the members from Edinburgh, and gave his usual support to his party. In September he became War Secretary, with a seat in the Whig Cabinet under Lord Melbourne. Consequently he suspended for a while his literary tasks, conducting the business of his department with commendable industry, but without enthusiasm. In the session of 1840 and 1841, during the angry discussions pertaining to the registration of votes in Ireland, he gave proof of having profited by the severe legal

training he had received from his labors in India. During these years he found time to write a few reviews, the one on Lord Clive being the most prominent.

The great subject of political agitation at this period was the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Whig leaders had lost the earnestness which had marked their grand efforts when they carried the Reform Bill of 1832, and were more indifferent to further reforms than suited their constituents; so that, at a dangerous financial crisis in 1841, the direction of public affairs fell into the hands of the Tories, under Sir Robert Peel. This great man not only rescued the nation from its fiscal embarrassments, but having been convinced by the arguments of Cobden of the necessity of repealing the Corn Laws, he carried through that great reform, to the disgust of his party and to his own undying fame. I have treated of this period more at large in another volume of this series.[1]

Macaulay was not much moved by the fall of the ministry to which he belonged, and gladly resumed his literary labors, — the first fruits of his leisure being an essay on Warren Hastings, a companion piece to the one on Clive.

These East Indian essays constitute the most picturesque and graphic account of British conquests in

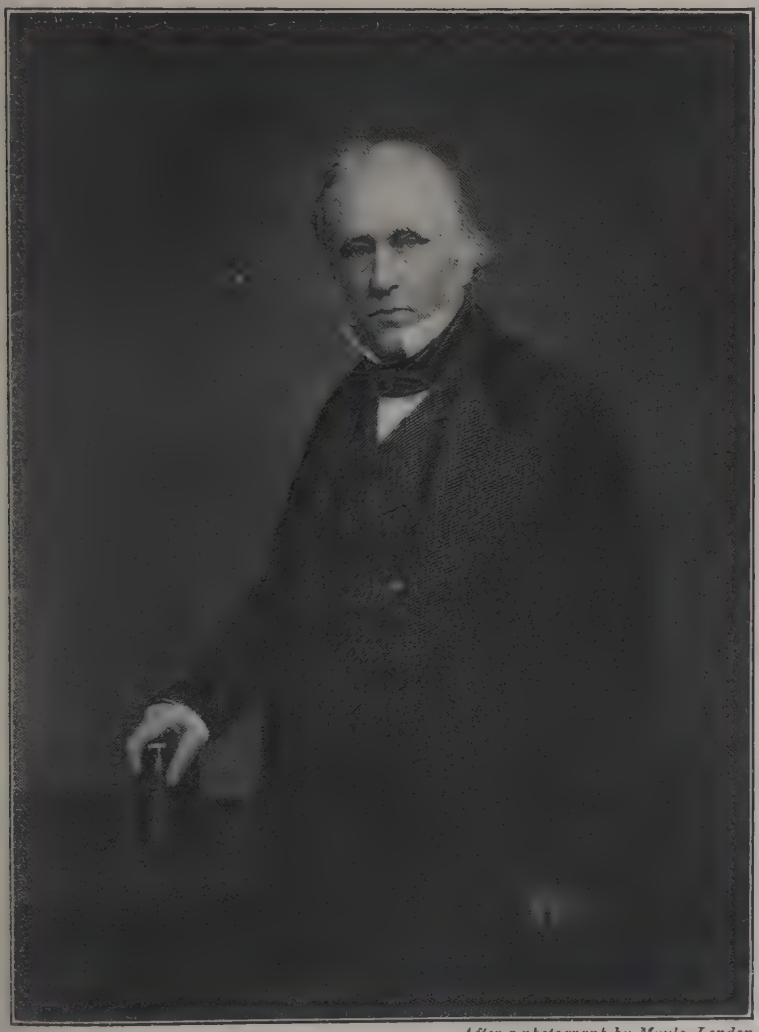
[1] Beacon Lights of History: European Leaders.

that ancient land that has been given to the public. Macaulay's intimate knowledge of the ground, and his literary resources, enabled him to picture the dazzling successes of Clive and Hastings; so that the careers of those superb military chieftains and commercial robber-statesmen, in securing for their country the control of a distant province larger than France, and in enriching the British Empire and themselves beyond all precedent in conquest, stand splendidly portrayed forever.

Macaulay had now taken apartments in The Albany, on the second floor, to which he removed his large library, and in which he comfortably lived for fifteen years. His article on Warren Hastings was followed by that on Frederic the Great. His numerous articles in the Edinburgh Review had now become so popular that there was a great demand for them in a separate form. Curiously enough, as in the case of Carlyle, it was in America that the public appreciation of these essays first took the form of book publication; and Macaulay's "Miscellanies" were published in Boston in 1840, and in Philadelphia in 1842. As these volumes began to go to England, for Macaulay's own protection they were republished by Longman, revised by the author, in 1843, and obtained an immediate and immense sale, — reaching one hundred and twenty thousand copies in England, — which added to

the fame and income of Macaulay. But he was never satisfied with the finish of his own productions; the only thing which seemed to comfort him was that the last essays were better than the first. In addition to his labors for the Edinburgh, was the publication of a volume of his poems in 1842, which was also enthusiastically received by his admirers. His last notable essays were a chivalrous article on Madame D'Arblay (January, 1843); an entirely charming account of Addison and the wits of Queen Anne's reign (July, 1843); an interesting review of the Memoirs of Barère, the French revolutionist and writer (April, 1844); and finally a second article on Lord Chatham (October, 1844), which is considered finer than the first one written twenty years earlier. More and more, however, the project of writing a History of England had taken possession of him, and he began now to forego all other literary occupation, and to devote all his leisure time to that great work.

During much of the time that Macaulay had continued writing his reviews, at the rate of about two in a year, he was an active member of Parliament, frequently addressing the House of Commons, and earning the gratitude of the country by his liberal and enlightened views, — especially those in reference to the right of Unitarians to their chapels, to the enlarged money-grant given to the Irish Roman Catholic



After a photograph by Maule, London

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

Maynooth College, and to the extension of copyrights. He rarely spoke without careful preparation. His speeches were forcible and fine. In the higher field of debate, however, as we have already intimated, he was not successful. In 1845 Sir Robert Peel retired, the Whigs again coming into power; and in 1846 Macaulay accepted the office of Paymaster of the Forces, because its duties were comparatively light and would not much interfere with his literary labors, while it added £2000 a year to his income. During the session of 1846 and 1847, while still in Parliament, he spoke only five times, although the House was ever ready to listen to him.

In the year 1847 the disruption of the Scotch Church was effected, and in the bitterness engendered by that movement Macaulay lost his popularity with his Edinburgh constituents. He seemed indifferent to their affairs; he answered their letters irregularly and with almost contemptuous brevity. He had no sympathy with the radicals who at that time controlled a large number of votes, and he refused to contribute towards electioneering expenses. Above all, he was absorbed in his History, and had lost much of his interest in politics. In consequence he failed to be re-elected, and not unwillingly retired to private life.

Macaulay now concentrated all his energies on the

History, which occupied his thoughts, his studies, and his pen for the most part during the remainder of his life. The first two volumes were published in the latter part of 1848; and the sale was immense, surpassing that of any historical work in the history of literature, and coming near to the sale of the novels of Sir Walter Scott. The popularity of the work was not confined to scholars and statesmen and critics, but it was equally admired by ordinary readers; and not in England and Scotland alone, but in the United States, in France, in Holland, in Germany, and other countries.

The labor expended on these books was prodigious. The author visited in person nearly all the localities in England and Ireland where the events he narrated took place. He ransacked the archives of most of the governments of Europe, and all the libraries to which he could gain access, public and private. He worked twelve hours a day, and yet produced on an average only two printed pages daily, — so careful was he in verifying his facts and in arranging his materials, writing and rewriting until no further improvement could be made.

This book was not merely the result of his researches for the last fifteen years of his life, but of his general reading for nearly fifty years, when everything he read he remembered. Says Thackeray, "He

reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels one hundred miles to make a line of description." The extent and exactness of his knowledge were not only marvellous, but almost incredible. Mr. Buckle declared that Macaulay was perfectly accurate in all the facts which Buckle had himself investigated to write his "History of Civilization;" and so particular was he in the selection of words that he never allowed a sentence to pass muster until it was as good as he could make it. "He thought little of reconstructing a paragraph," says his biographer, "for the sake of one happy illustration." He submitted to the most tiresome mechanical drudgery in the correction of his proof-sheets. The clearness of his thought amid the profusion of his knowledge was represented in his writing by a remarkable conciseness of expression. His short, vigorous sentences are compact with details of fact, yet rich with color. His terseness has been compared to that of Tacitus. His power of condensation, aptness of phrase and epithet, and indomitable industry made him a master of rhetorical effect, in the use of his multifarious learning for the illustration of his themes.

As soon as his last proof-sheet had been despatched to the printers, Macaulay at once fell to reading a series of historians from Herodotus downward, to measure his writings with theirs. Thucydides es-

pecially utterly destroyed all the conceit which naturally would arise from his unbounded popularity, as expressed in every social and literary circle, as well as in the Reviews. Like Michael Angelo, this Englishman was never satisfied with his own productions; and the only comfort he took in the impossibility of realizing his ideal was in the comparison he made of his own works with similar ones by contemporary authors. Then he was content; and then only appeared in his letters and diary that good-natured, self-satisfied feeling which arose from the consciousness that he was one of the most fortunate authors who had ever lived. There was nothing cynical in his sense of superiority, but an amiable self-assertion and self-confidence that only made men smile, — as when Lord Palmerston remarked that "he wished he was as certain of any one thing as Tom Macaulay was of everything." This self-confidence rarely provoked opposition, except when he was positive as to things outside his sphere. He wrote and talked sensibly and luminously on financial and social questions, on art, on poetry and the drama, on philosophy and theology; but on these subjects he was not an authority with specialists. In other words, he did not, so to speak, know everything profoundly, but only superficially; yet in history, especially English history, he was profound in analysis as well as brilliant

in the narration of facts, even when there was disagreement between himself and others as to inductions he drew from those facts, — inductions colored by his strong prejudices and aristocratic surroundings.

Macaulay was not always consistent with his own theories, however. For instance, he was a firm believer in the progress of society and of civilization. He saw the enormous gulf between the ninth and the nineteenth centuries, and the unmistakable advance which, since the times of Hildebrand, the world had made in knowledge, in the arts, in liberty, and in the comforts of life, although the tide of progress had its ebb and flow in different ages and countries. Yet when he cast his eye on America, where perhaps the greatest progress had been made in the world's history within fifty years, he saw nothing but melancholy signs of anarchy and decay, — signs portending the collapse of liberty and the triumph of ignorance and crime. Thus he writes in 1857 to an American correspondent: —

"As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land, your laboring population will be far more at ease than the laboring population of the Old World; but the time will come when wages will be as low, and will fluctuate as much, with you as with us. Then your institutions will fairly be brought to the test. Distress everywhere makes the laborer mutinous and discontented, and inclines him to listen with eagerness to agitators who tell him that it is a monstrous iniquity

that one man should have a million, while another cannot get a full meal. In bad years there is plenty of grumbling here, and sometimes a little rioting; but it matters little, for here the sufferers are not the rulers. The supreme power is in the hands of a class deeply interested in the security of property and the maintenance of order; accordingly the malcontents are restrained. But with you the majority is the government, and has the rich, who are always in a minority, absolutely at its mercy. The day will come when the multitude of people, none of whom has had more than a half a breakfast, or expects to have more than a half a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of legislature will be chosen? On the one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of the public faith; and on the other a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne and ride in a carriage, while thousands of honest folks are in want of necessaries: which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a working-man who hears his children cry for more bread? There will be, I fear, spoliation. The spoliation will increase the distress; the distress will produce fresh spoliation. There is nothing to stop you; your Constitution is all sail and no anchor. Either civilization or liberty will perish. Either some Cæsar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand, or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth."

I do not deny that there is great force in Macaulay's reasoning and prophecy. History points to decline and ruin when public virtue has fled and government is in the hands of demagogues; for their reign has ever been succeeded by military usurpers who have preserved civilization indeed, but at the expense of liberty. Yet this reasoning applies not only to America but to England as well, — especially since, by the Reform Bill and subsequent enactments of Parliament, she has opened the gates to an increase of suffrage, which now threatens to become universal. The enfranchisement of the people — the enlarged powers of the individual under the protection and control of the commonwealth — is the Anglo-Saxon contribution to progress. It is dangerous. So is all power until its use is learned. But there is no backward step possible; the tremendous experiment must go forward, for England and America alike.

Macaulay himself was one of the most prominent of English statesmen and orators, in 1830, 1831, and 1832, to advocate the extension of the right of suffrage and the increase of popular liberties. All his writings are on the side of liberty in England; and all are in opposition to the Toryism which was so triumphant during the reign of George III. Why did he have faith in the English people of England, and yet show so little in the English people of America? He believed in politi-

cal and social progress for his own countrymen; why should he doubt the utility of the same in other countries? If vandalism is to be the fate of America, where education, the only truly conservative element, is more diffused than in England, why should it not equally triumph in that country when the masses have gained political power, as they surely will at some time, and even speedily, if the policy inaugurated by Gladstone is to triumph? For England Macaulay had unbounded hope, because he believed in progress, — in liberty, in education, in the civilizing influence of machinery, in the increasing comforts of life through the constant increase of wealth among the middle classes, and especially through the power of Christianity, in spite of the dissensions of sects, the attacks of crude philosophers, socialists, anarchists, scientists, and atheists, from one end of Christendom to the other. Why should he not have equal faith in American civilization, which, in spite of wars and strikes and commercial distresses and political corruption, has yet made a marked progress from the time of Jefferson, the apostle of equality, down to our day, — as seen especially in the multiplication of schools and colleges, in an untrammelled and watchful press, and in the active benevolence of the rich in the foundation of every kind of institution to relieve misery and want? The truth is that he, in common with most educated Eng-

lishmen of his day, — and of too many even of our own day, — cherished a silent contempt for Americans, for their literature and their institutions; and hence he was not only inconsistent in the principles which he advocated, but showed that he was not emancipated, with all his learning, from prejudices of which he ought to have been ashamed.

As time made inroads on Macaulay's strong constitution, he gave up both politics and society in the absorbing interest which he took in his History, confining himself to his library, and sometimes allowing months to pass without accepting any invitation whatever to a social gathering. No man was ever more disenchanted with society. He begrudged his time even when tempted by the calls of friendship. When visitors penetrated to his den, he bowed them out with ironical politeness. He had no favors to ask from friends or foes, for he declined political office, and was as independent as wealth or fame could make him. In 1849 he was made Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, and the acclamations following his address were prodigious. Lord John Russell gave to Macaulay's brother John a living worth £1100. Macaulay himself was offered the professorship of History at Cambridge. In one year he received for the first edition of his third and fourth volumes of the History, published in 1855, £20,000 in a single check from Longman. At the age

of forty-nine, he writes in his diary: "I have no cause for complaint, — tolerable health, competence, liberty, leisure, dear relatives and friends, and a very great literary reputation."

With all this prosperity, Macaulay now naturally set up his carriage. He dined often with the Queen, and was a great man, according to English notions, more even from his wealth and social position than from his success in letters. Lord John Russell pressed him to accept a seat in his cabinet, but "I told him," Macaulay writes, "that I should be of no use, — that I was not a debater; that it was too late to become one; that my temper, taste, and literary habits alike prevented." He was, however, induced to become again a member of Parliament, and in 1852 was elected once more for Edinburgh, which had repented of its rejection of him in 1847. But he insisted on perfect independence to vote as he pleased. He regarded this re-entrance into public life as a great personal sacrifice, since it might postpone the appearance of his next two volumes of the History. His election, however, was received with great acclamation. Even Professor Wilson, the most conservative of Scotch Tories, voted for him. It was not a party victory, but purely a personal triumph.

A serious illness now follows, — a weakness of the heart, from the effects of which Macaulay died a few

years afterwards. He retires to Clifton, and gives himself up to getting well, visiting Barley Wood, and driving in his private carriage among the most interesting scenery in the west of England. But he was never perfectly well again, although he continued to work on his History. His intimate friends saw the change in him with sadness, but he himself was serene and uncomplaining. Although he suffered from an oppression of the chest, he still on great occasions addressed the House. His mind was clear, but his voice was faint. The last speech he made was in behalf of the independence of the Scottish Church. The strain of the House of Commons proved to be too great for his now enfeebled constitution. "Nor could he conceal from himself and his friends," says Trevelyan, "that it was a grievous waste, while the reign of Anne still remained unwritten, for him to consume his scanty stock of vigor in the tedious and exhaustive routine of political existence; waiting whole evenings for the vote, and then . . . trudging home at three in the morning through the slush of a February thaw." He therefore spared himself as a member of Parliament, and carefully husbanded his powers in order to work upon his book. He gave himself more time for his annual vacation, yet would write when he could on the subjects which engrossed his life. His labors were too severe for his strength, but he worked on, and even harder and harder.

At length on the 25th of November, 1855, Macaulay sent to the printer the last twenty pages of his History, and an edition of twenty-five thousand was ordered. Within a generation one hundred and forty thousand copies of the work were sold in the United Kingdom alone. Six rival translators were engaged in turning it into German; and it was published in the Polish, the Danish, the Swedish, the Italian, the French, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Hungarian, the Russian, and the Bohemian languages, to say nothing of its immense circulation in the United States. Such extraordinary literary popularity was accompanied by great honors. In 1857 Macaulay was created a British Peer and elected Lord High Steward of the borough of Cambridge. The academies of Utrecht, Munich, and Turin elected him to honorary membership. The King of Prussia made him a member of the Order of Merit. Oxford conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, and he was elected president of the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh. He could have little more in the way of academic and governmental honors.

The failing health of Macaulay now compelled him to resign his seat in the House of Commons. It was also thought desirable for him to vacate his apartments at The Albany, which he had occupied for fifteen years, that he might be more retired and perhaps

more comfortable. His friends, at the suggestion of Dean Milman, selected a house in Kensington, the rooms of which were small, except the library, which opened upon a beautiful lawn, adorned with flowers and shrubs; it was called Holly Lodge, and was very secluded and attractive. Here his latter days were spent, in the society of his nieces and a few devoted friends, and in dispensing simple hospitalities. His favorite form of entertainment was the breakfast, at which his guests would linger till twelve, enchanted by his conversation, for his mind showed no signs of decay.

From this charming retreat Lord Macaulay very seldom appeared in London society. Years passed without his even accepting invitations. An occasional night at a friend's house in the country, one or two nights at Windsor Castle, and one or two visits to Lord Stanhope's seat in Kent in order to consult his magnificent library, were the only visits which Macaulay made in the course of the year. He always had a dislike of visiting in private houses, much preferring hotels, where he could be free from conventional life.

Macaulay was always careful in his expenditures, wasting nothing that he might enjoy the pleasure of charity, — for he gave liberally, especially to needy and unfortunate men of letters. Once he gave £100 to a total stranger who implored his aid. In his

household he was revered, for he was the kindest and most considerate of masters, while his relatives absolutely worshipped him. At home he made no claim to the privileges of genius; he had few eccentricities; he never interfered with the pleasures of others; he never obtruded his advice, or demanded that his own views or tastes should be consulted; he was especially careful not to wound the feelings of those with whom he lived. Children were his delight and solace. Over them he seemed to have unbounded influence. He would spend the half of a busy day in playing with them, and in inventing new games for their diversion. One of his pleasures was to take them to see the sights of London. His sympathies were quick and generous; although apparently so cynical in his opinions of books, he was always affected at any touches of pathos, even to tears.

It was hard for Macaulay to realize that the time had come when he must leave untold that portion of English history with which he was more familiar than any other living man; but he submitted to the inevitable without repining. He had done what he could. Even when he was compelled to give up his daily task, his love of reading remained; a book was his solace to the last. He had no extensive acquaintance with the works of some of the best writers of his own generation, preferring the classic authors of antiquity, and

of England in the time of Anne. He did not relish Coleridge or Carlyle or Buckle or Ruskin, or indeed any writer who seemed to strain after originality of style, in defiance of the old and conservative canons. He preferred Miss Austen to Dickens. He felt that he owed a great debt to the master-minds of by-gone ages, who reached perfection of style, so far as it can be attained. Even the English writers of the reign of Anne, to his mind, have never been surpassed. His admiration for Addison was unbounded. Dryden and Pope to him were greater poets than any who have succeeded them. Such a poet as Tennyson or Wordsworth he pretended he did not understand. He wanted transparent clearness of expression. Browning would have been to him an abomination. He despised the poetry of his own age, with its involved sentences, its obscurity, and its strange metres. His own poetry was as direct as Homer, as simple as Chaucer, and as graphic as Scott.

In 1859, Macaulay contrived to visit once more the English lakes and the western highlands, where he was received with great veneration, being recognized everywhere on steamers and railway stations. But his cheerfulness had now departed, although he made an effort to be agreeable. In December of this year he ceased writing in his diary. The physicians pretended to think that he was better, but fainting fits

set in. On Christmas he said but little, and was constantly dropping to sleep. His relatives did not seem to think that he was in immediate danger, but the end was near. He died without pain, and was buried in Westminster Abbey on the 9th of January, 1860, having for pall-bearers the most illustrious men in England. He rests in the Poet's Corner, amid the tombs of Johnson and Garrick, Handel and Goldsmith, Gay and Addison, leaving behind him an immortal fame.

And what is this fame? It is not that of a philosophical historian like Guizot, for his History is not marked by profound generalizations, or even thoughtful reflections. He was not a judicial historian like Hallam, seeking to present the truth alone; for he was a partisan, full of party prejudices. Nor was he an historian like Ranke, raking out the hidden facts of a remote period, and unveiling the astute diplomacy of past ages. Macaulay was a great historical painter of the realistic school, whose pictures have never been surpassed, or even equalled, for vividness and interest. In this class of historians he stands out alone and peerless, the most exciting and the most interesting of all the historians who have depicted the manners, the events, and the characters of a former age, — never by any accident dull, but fatiguing, if at all, only by his wealth of illustration and the over-brilliancy of

his coloring. He is the Titian of word-painting, and as such will live like that immortal colorist. Critics may say what they please about his rhetoric, about his partial statements, about his want of insight into deep philosophical questions; but as a painter who made his figures stand out on the historical canvas with unique vividness, Macaulay cannot fail to be regarded, as long as the English language is spoken or written, as one of the great masters of literary composition. This was the verdict pronounced by the English nation at large; and its great political and literary leaders expressed and confirmed it, when they gave him fortune and fame, elevated him to the peerage, bestowed on him stars and titles, and buried him with august solemnity among those illustrious men who gave to England its power and glory.

SHAKSPEARE; OR, THE POET.

1564–1616.

SHAKSPEARE; OR, THE POET.[1]

By RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

GREAT men are more distinguished by range and extent than by originality. If we require the originality which consists in weaving, like a spider, their web from their own bowels; in finding clay and making bricks and building the house; no great men are original. Nor does valuable originality consist in unlikeness to other men. The hero is in the press of knights and the thick of events; and seeing what men want and sharing their desire, he adds the needful length of sight and of arm to come at the desired point. The greatest genius is the most indebted man. A poet is no rattle-brain, saying what comes uppermost, and, because he says everything, saying at last something good; but a heart in unison with his time and country. There is nothing whimsical and fantastic in his production, but sweet and sad earnest, freighted with the

[1] Reprinted from "Representative Men," by permission of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., publishers of Emerson's works.

weightiest convictions and pointed with the most determined aim which any man or class knows of in his times.

The Genius of our life is jealous of individuals, and will not have any individual great, except through the general. There is no choice to genius. A great man does not wake up on some fine morning and say, 'I am full of life, I will go to sea and find an Antarctic continent: to-day I will square the circle: I will ransack botany and find a new food for man: I have a new architecture in my mind: I foresee a new mechanic power:' no, but he finds himself in the river of the thoughts and events, forced onward by the ideas and necessities of his contemporaries. He stands where all the eyes of men look one way, and their hands all point in the direction in which he should go. The Church has reared him amidst rites and pomps, and he carries out the advice which her music gave him, and builds a cathedral needed by her chants and processions. He finds a war raging: it educates him, by trumpet, in barracks, and he betters the instruction. He finds two counties groping to bring coal, or flour, or fish, from the place of production to the place of consumption, and he hits on a railroad. Every master has found his materials collected, and his power lay in his sympathy with his people and in his love of the materials he wrought in. What an economy of power! and what a compen-

sation for the shortness of life! All is done to his hand. The world has brought him thus far on his way. The human race has gone out before him, sunk the hills, filled the hollows, and bridged the rivers. Men, nations, poets, artisans, women, all have worked for him, and he enters into their labors. Choose any other thing, out of the line of tendency, out of the national feeling and history, and he would have all to do for himself: his powers would be expended in the first preparations. Great genial power, one would almost say, consists in not being original at all; in being altogether receptive, in letting the world do all, and suffering the spirit of the hour to pass unobstructed through the mind.

Shakspeare's youth fell in a time when the English people were importunate for dramatic entertainments. The court took offence easily at political allusions and attempted to suppress them. The Puritans, a growing and energetic party, and the religious among the Anglican church, would suppress them. But the people wanted them. Inn-yards, houses without roofs, and extemporaneous enclosures at country fairs were the ready theatres of strolling players. The people had tasted this new joy; and, as we could not hope to suppress newspapers now, — no, not by the strongest party, — neither then could king, prelate, or puritan, alone or united, suppress an organ which was ballad,

epic, newspaper, caucus, lecture, Punch and library, at the same time. Probably king, prelate, and puritan all found their own account in it. It had become, by all causes, a national interest, — by no means conspicuous, so that some great scholar would have thought of treating it in an English history, — but not a whit less considerable because it was cheap and of no account, like a baker's-shop. The best proof of its vitality is the crowd of writers which suddenly broke into this field: Kyd, Marlow, Greene, Jonson, Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Heywood, Middleton, Peele, Ford, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher.

The secure possession, by the stage, of the public mind, is of the first importance to the poet who works for it. He loses no time in idle experiments. Here is audience and expectation prepared. In the case of Shakspeare there is much more. At the time when he left Stratford and went up to London, a great body of stage-plays of all dates and writers existed in manuscript and were in turn produced on the boards. Here is the Tale of Troy, which the audience will bear hearing some part of, every week; the Death of Julius Cæsar, and other stories out of Plutarch, which they never tire of; a shelf full of English history, from the chronicles of Brut and Arthur down to the royal Henries, which men hear eagerly; and a string of doleful tragedies, merry Italian tales, and Spanish voyages, which all the Lon-

don 'prentices know. All the mass has been treated, with more or less skill, by every playwright, and the prompter has the soiled and tattered manuscripts. It is now no longer possible to say who wrote them first. They have been the property of the Theatre so long, and so many rising geniuses have enlarged or altered them, inserting a speech or a whole scene, or adding a song, that no man can any longer claim copyright in this work of numbers. Happily, no man wishes to. They are not yet desired in that way. We have few readers, many spectators and hearers. They had best lie where they are.

Shakspeare, in common with his comrades, esteemed the mass of old plays waste stock, in which any experiment could be freely tried. Had the *prestige* which hedges about a modern tragedy existed, nothing could have been done. The rude warm blood of the living England circulated in the play, as in street-ballads, and gave body which he wanted to his airy and majestic fancy. The poet needs a ground in popular tradition on which he may work, and which, again, may restrain his art within the due temperance. It holds him to the people, supplies a foundation for his edifice, and in furnishing so much work done to his hand, leaves him at leisure and in full strength for the audacities of his imagination. In short, the poet owes to his legend what sculpture owed to the temple. Sculp-

ture in Egypt and in Greece grew up in subordination to architecture. It was the ornament of the temple wall: at first a rude relief carved on pediments, then the relief became bolder and a head or arm was projected from the wall; the groups being still arranged with reference to the building, which serves also as a frame to hold the figures; and when at last the greatest freedom of style and treatment was reached, the prevailing genius of architecture still enforced a certain calmness and continence in the statue. As soon as the statue was begun for itself, and with no reference to the temple or palace, the art began to decline: freak, extravagance, and exhibition took the place of the old temperance. This balance-wheel, which the sculptor found in architecture, the perilous irritability of poetic talent found in the accumulated dramatic materials to which the people were already wonted, and which had a certain excellence which no single genius, however extraordinary, could hope to create.

In point of fact it appears that Shakspeare did owe debts in all directions, and was able to use whatever he found; and the amount of indebtedness may be inferred from Malone's laborious computations in regard to the First, Second, and Third parts of Henry VI., in which, "out of 6,043 lines, 1,771 were written by some author preceding Shakspeare, 2,373 by him, on the foundations laid by his predecessors, and 1,899 were

entirely his own." And the proceeding investigation hardly leaves a single drama of his absolute invention. Malone's sentence is an important piece of external history. In Henry VIII. I think I see plainly the cropping out of the original rock on which his own finer stratum was laid. The first play was written by a superior, thoughtful man, with a vicious ear. I can mark his lines, and know well their cadence. See Wolsey's soliloquy, and the following scene with Cromwell, where, instead of the metre of Shakspeare, whose secret is that the thought constructs the tune, so that reading for the sense will best bring out the rhythm,— here the lines are constructed on a given tune, and the verse has even a trace of pulpit eloquence. But the play contains through all its length unmistakable traits of Shakspeare's hand, and some passages, as the account of the coronation, are like autographs. What is odd, the compliment to Queen Elizabeth is in the bad rhythm.

Shakespeare knew that tradition supplies a better fable than any invention can. If he lost any credit of design, he augmented his resources; and, at that day, our petulant demand for originality was not so much pressed. There was no literature for the million. The universal reading, the cheap press, were unknown. A great poet who appears in illiterate times, absorbs into his sphere all the light which is anywhere radiating.

Every intellectual jewel, every flower of sentiment it is his fine office to bring to his people; and he comes to value his memory equally with his invention. He is therefore little solicitous whence his thoughts have been derived; whether through translation, whether through tradition, whether by travel in distant countries, whether by inspiration; from whatever source, they are equally welcome to his uncritical audience. Nay, he borrows very near home. Other men say wise things as well as he; only they say a good many foolish things, and do not know when they have spoken wisely. He knows the sparkle of the true stone, and puts it in high place, wherever he finds it. Such is the happy position of Homer perhaps; of Chaucer, of Saadi. They felt that all wit was their wit. And they are librarians and historiographers, as well as poets. Each romancer was heir and dispenser of all the hundred tales of the world, —

> "Presenting Thebes' and Pelops' line
> And the tale of Troy divine."

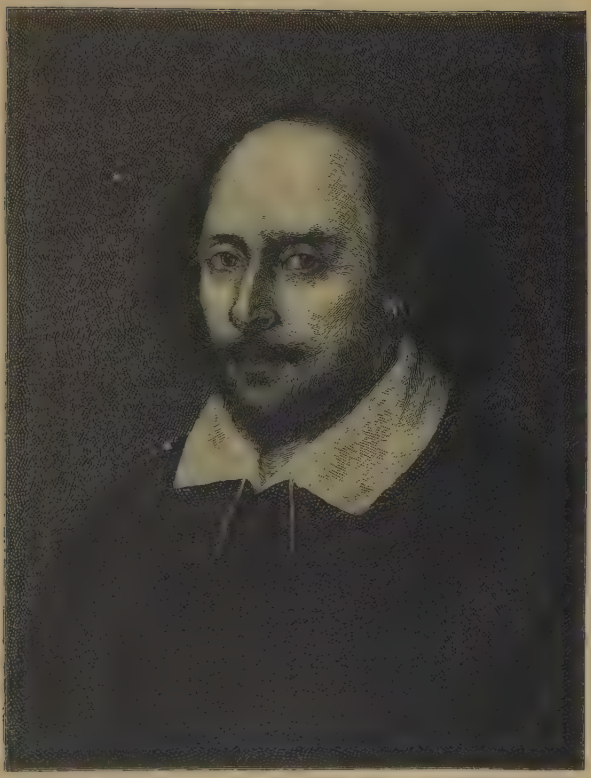
The influence of Chaucer is conspicuous in all our early literature; and more recently not only Pope and Dryden have been beholden to him, but, in the whole society of English writers, a large unacknowledged debt is easily traced. One is charmed with the opulence which feeds so many pensioners. But Chaucer is a huge borrower. Chaucer, it seems, drew continually,

through Lydgate and Caxton, from Guido di Colonna, whose Latin romance of the Trojan war was in turn a compilation from Bares Phrygius, Ovid and Statius. Then Petrarch, Boccaccio, and the Provençal poets are his benefactors; the Romaunt of the Rose is only judicious translation from William of Lorris and John of Meung; Troilus and Creseide, from Lollius of Urbino; The Cock and the Fox, from the *Lais* of Marie; The House of Fame, from the French or Italian; and poor Gower he uses as if he were only a brick-kiln or stone-quarry out of which to build his house. He steals by this apology, — that what he takes has no worth where he finds it and the greatest where he leaves it. It has come to be practically a sort of rule in literature, that a man having once shown himself capable of original writing, is entitled thenceforth to steal from the writings of others at discretion. Thought is the property of him who can entertain it and of him who can adequately place it. A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed thoughts; but as soon as we have learned what to do with them they become our own.

Thus all originality is relative. Every thinker is retrospective. The learned member of the legislature, at Westminster or at Washington, speaks and votes for thousands. Show us the constituency, and the now invisible channels by which the senator is made aware of their wishes; the crowd of practical and knowing men,

who, by correspondence or conversation, are feeding him with evidence, anecdotes, and estimates, and it will bereave his fine attitudes and resistance of something of their impressiveness. As Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Webster vote, so Locke and Rousseau think, for thousands; and so there were fountains all around Homer, Manu, Saadi, or Milton, from which they drew; friends, lovers, books, traditions, proverbs, — all perished — which, if seen, would go to reduce the wonder. Did the bard speak with authority? Did he feel himself overmatched by any companion? The appeal is to the consciousness of the writer. Is there at last in his breast a Delphi whereof to ask concerning any thought or thing, whether it be verily so, yea or nay? and to have answer, and to rely on that? All the debts which such a man could contract to other wit would never disturb his consciousness of originality; for the ministrations of books and of other minds are a whiff of smoke to that most private reality with which he has conversed.

It is easy to see that what is best written or done by genius in the world, was no man's work, but came by wide social labor, when a thousand wrought like one, sharing the same impulse. Our English Bible is a wonderful specimen of the strength and music of the English language. But it was not made by one man, or at one time; but centuries and churches brought it to perfection. There never was a time when there was not



"The Chandos Portrait," National Portrait Gallery, London

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE

some translation existing. The Liturgy, admired for its energy and pathos, is an anthology of the piety of ages and nations, a translation of the prayers and forms of the Catholic church, — these collected, too, in long periods, from the prayers and meditations of every saint and sacred writer all over the world. Grotius makes the like remark in respect to the Lord's Prayer, that the single clauses of which it is composed were already in use in the time of Christ, in the Rabbinical forms. He picked out the grains of gold. The nervous language of the Common Law, the impressive forms of our courts and the precision and substantial truth of the legal distinctions, are the contribution of all the sharp-sighted, strong-minded men who have lived in the countries where these laws govern. The translation of Plutarch gets its excellence by being translation on translation. There never was a time when there was none. All the truly idiomatic and national phrases are kept, and all others successively picked out and thrown away. Something like the same process had gone on, long before, with the originals of these books. The world takes liberties with world-books. Vedas, Æsop's Fables, Pilpay, Arabian Nights, Cid, Iliad, Robin Hood, Scottish Minstrelsy, are not the work of single men. In the composition of such works the time thinks, the market thinks, the mason, the carpenter, the merchant, the farmer, the fop, all think for us.

Every book supplies its time with one good word; every municipal law, every trade, every folly of the day; and the generic catholic genius who is not afraid or ashamed to owe his originality to the originality of all, stands with the next age as the recorder and embodiment of his own.

We have to thank the researches of antiquaries, and the Shakspeare Society, for ascertaining the steps of the English drama, from the Mysteries celebrated in churches and by churchmen, and the final detachment from the church, and the completion of secular plays, from Ferrex and Porrex, and Gammer Gurton's Needle, down to the possession of the stage by the very pieces which Shakspeare altered, remodelled, and finally made his own. Elated with success and piqued by the growing interest of the problem, they have left no bookstall unsearched, no chest in a garret unopened, no file of old yellow accounts to decompose in damp and worms, so keen was the hope to discover whether the boy Shakspeare poached or not, whether he held horses at the theatre door, whether he kept school, and why he left in his will only his second-best bed to Anne Hathaway, his wife.

There is something touching in the madness with which the passing age mischooses the object on which all candles shine and all eyes are turned; the care with which it registers every trifle touching Queen Elizabeth

and King James, and the Essexes, Leicesters, Burleighs, and Buckinghams; and lets pass without a single valuable note the founder of another dynasty, which alone will cause the Tudor dynasty to be remembered, — the man who carries the Saxon race in him by the inspiration which feeds him, and on whose thoughts the foremost people of the world are now for some ages to be nourished, and minds to receive this and not another bias. A popular player; — nobody suspected he was the poet of the human race; and the secret was kept as faithfully from poets and intellectual men as from courtiers and frivolous people. Bacon, who took the inventory of the human understanding for his times, never mentioned his name. Ben Jonson, though we have strained his few words of regard and panegyric, had no suspicion of the elastic fame whose first vibrations he was attempting. He no doubt thought the praise he has conceded to him generous, and esteemed himself, out of all question, the better poet of the two.

If it need wit to know wit, according to the proverb, Shakspeare's time should be capable of recognizing it. Sir Henry Wotton was born four years after Shakspeare, and died twenty-three years after him; and I find, among his correspondents and acquaintances, the following persons: Theodore Beza, Isaac Casaubon, Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Essex, Lord Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh, John Milton, Sir Henry Vane, Isaac Wal-

ton; Dr. Donne, Abraham Cowley, Bellarmine, Charles Cotton, John Pym, John Hales, Kepler, Vieta, Albericus Gentilis, Paul Sarpi, Arminius; with all of whom exists some token of his having communicated, without enumerating many others whom doubtless he saw, — Shakspeare, Spenser, Jonson, Beaumont, Massinger, the two Herberts, Marlow, Chapman and the rest. Since the constellation of great men who appeared in Greece in the time of Pericles, there was never any such society; — yet their genius failed them to find out the best head in the universe. Our poet's mask was impenetrable. You cannot see the mountain near. It took a century to make it suspected; and not until two centuries had passed, after his death, did any criticism which we think adequate begin to appear. It was not possible to write the history of Shakspeare till now; for he is the father of German literature: it was with the introduction of Shakspeare into German, by Lessing, and the translation of his works by Wieland and Schlegel, that the rapid burst of German literature was most intimately connected. It was not until the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of Hamlet could find such wondering readers. Now, literature, philosophy, and thought, are Shakspearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm. Coleridge

and Goethe are the only critics who have expressed our convictions with any adequate fidelity: but there is in all cultivated minds a silent appreciation of his superlative power and beauty, which, like Christianity, qualifies the period.

The Shakspeare Society have inquired in all directions, advertised the missing facts, offered money for any information that will lead to proof, — and with what result? Beside some important illustration of the history of the English stage, to which I have adverted, they have gleaned a few facts touching the property, and dealings in regard to property, of the poet. It appears that from year to year he owned a larger share in the Blackfriars' Theatre: its wardrobe and other appurtenances were his: that he bought an estate in his native village with his earnings as writer and shareholder; that he lived in the best house in Stratford; was intrusted by his neighbors with their commissions in London, as of borrowing money, and the like; that he was a veritable farmer. About the time when he was writing Macbeth, he sues Philip Rogers, in the Borough-court of Stratford, for thirty-five shillings, ten pence, for corn delivered to him at different times; and in all respects appears as a good husband, with no reputation for eccentricity or excess. He was a good-natured sort of man, an actor and shareholder in the theatre, not in any striking manner dis-

tinguished from other actors and managers. I admit the importance of this information. It was well worth the pains that have been taken to procure it.

But whatever scraps of information concerning his condition these researches may have rescued, they can shed no light upon that infinite invention which is the concealed magnet of his attraction for us. We are very clumsy writers of history. We tell the chronicle of parentage, birth, birthplace, schooling, schoolmates, earning of money, marriage, publication of books, celebrity, death; and when we have come to an end of this gossip no ray of relation appears between it and the goddess-born; and it seems as if, had we dipped at random into the "Modern Plutarch," and read any other life there, it would have fitted the poems as well. It is the essence of poetry to spring, like the rainbow daughter of Wonder, from the invisible, to abolish the past and refuse all history. Malone, Warburton, Dyce, and Collier, have wasted their oil. The famed theatres, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, the Park, and Tremont have vainly assisted. Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and Macready dedicate their lives to this genius; him they crown, elucidate, obey, and express. The genius knows them not. The recitation begins; one golden word leaps out immortal from all this painted pedantry and sweetly torments us with invitations to its own inaccessible homes. I remember I went once to see

the Hamlet of a famed performer, the pride of the English stage; and all I then heard and all I now remember of the tragedian was that in which the tragedian had no part; simply Hamlet's question to the ghost: —

> "What may this mean,
> That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel
> Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon?"

That imagination which dilates the closet he writes in to the world's dimension, crowds it with agents in rank and order, as quickly reduces the big reality to be the glimpses of the moon. These tricks of his magic spoil for us the illusions of the green-room. Can any biography shed light on the localities into which the Midsummer Night's Dream admits me? Did Shakspeare confide to any notary or parish recorder, sacristan, or surrogate in Stratford, the genesis of that delicate creation? The forest of Arden, the nimble air of Scone Castle, the moonlight of Portia's villa, "the antres vast and desarts idle" of Othello's captivity, — where is the third cousin, or grand-nephew, the chancellor's file of accounts, or private letter, that has kept one word of those transcendent secrets? In fine, in this drama, as in all great works of art, — in the Cyclopæan architecture of Egypt and India, in the Phidian sculpture, the Gothic minsters, the Italian painting, the Ballads of Spain and Scotland, — the Genius draws up the ladder after him, when the creative age goes up to heaven,

and gives way to a new age, which sees the works and asks in vain for a history.

Shakspeare is the only biographer of Shakspeare; and even he can tell nothing, except to the Shakspeare in us, — that is, to our most apprehensive and sympathetic hour. He cannot step from off his tripod and give us anecdotes of his inspirations. Read the antique documents extricated, analysed and compared by the assiduous Dyce and Collier; and now read one of these skyey sentences, — aerolites, — which seem to have fallen out of heaven, and which not your experience but the man within the breast has accepted as words of fate, and tell me if they match — if the former account in any manner for the latter; or which gives the most historical insight into the man.

Hence, though our external history is so meagre, yet, with Shakspeare for biographer, instead of Aubrey and Rowe, we have really the information which is material; that which describes character and fortune; that which, if we were about to meet the man and deal with him, would most import us to know. We have his recorded convictions on those questions which knock for answer at every heart, — on life and death, on love, on wealth and poverty, on the prizes of life and the ways whereby we come at them; on the characters of men, and the influences, occult and open, which affect their fortunes; and on those mysterious and demoniacal

powers which defy our science and which yet interweave their malice and their gift in our brightest hours. Who ever read the volume of the Sonnets without finding that the poet had there revealed, under masks that are no masks to the intelligent, the lore of friendship and of love; the confusion of sentiments in the most susceptible, and, at the same time, the most intellectual of men? What trait of his private mind has he hidden in his dramas? One can discern, in his ample pictures of the gentleman and the king, what forms and humanities pleased him; his delight in troops of friends, in large hospitality, in cheerful giving. Let Timon, let Warwick, let Antonio the merchant answer for his great heart. So far from Shakspeare's being the least known, he is the one person, in all modern history, known to us. What point of morals, of manners, of economy, of philosophy, of religion, of taste, of the conduct of life, has he not settled? What mystery has he not signified his knowledge of? What office, or function, or district of man's work has he not remembered? What king has he not taught state, as Talma taught Napoleon? What maiden has not found him finer than her delicacy? What lover has he not outloved? What sage has he not outseen? What gentleman has he not instructed in the rudeness of his behavior?

Some able and appreciating critics think no criticism on Shakspeare valuable that does not rest purely on the

dramatic merit; that he is falsely judged as poet and philosopher. I think as highly as these critics of his dramatic merit, but still think it secondary. He was a full man, who liked to talk; a brain exhaling thoughts and images, which, seeking vent, found the drama next at hand. Had he been less, we should have had to consider how well he filled his place, how good a dramatist he was, — and he is the best in the world. But it turns out that what he has to say is of that weight as to withdraw some attention from the vehicle; and he is like some saint whose history is to be rendered into all languages, into verse and prose, into songs and pictures, and cut up into proverbs; so that the occasion which gave the saint's meaning the form of a conversation, or of a prayer, or of a code of laws, is immaterial compared with the universality of its application. So it fares with the wise Shakspeare and his book of life. He wrote the airs for all our modern music; he wrote the text of modern life; the text of manners; he drew the man of England and Europe, the father of the man in America; he drew the man, and described the day, and what is done in it; he read the hearts of men and women, their probity, and their second thought and wiles; the wiles of innocence, and the transitions by which virtues and vices slide into their contraries; he could divide the mother's part from the father's part in the face of the child, or draw the fine demarcations of

freedom and of fate; he knew the laws of repression which make the police of nature; and all the sweets and all the terrors of human lot lay in his mind as truly but as softly as the landscape lies on the eye. And the importance of this wisdom of life sinks the form, as of Drama or Epic, out of notice. 'T is like making a question concerning the paper on which a king's message is written.

Shakspeare is as much out of the category of eminent authors, as he is out of the crowd. He is inconceivably wise; the others, conceivably. A good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence; but not into Shakspeare's. We are still out of doors. For executive faculty, for creation, Shakspeare is unique. No man can imagine it better. He was the farthest reach of subtlety compatible with an individual self, — the subtilest of authors, and only just within the possibility of authorship. With this wisdom of life is the equal endowment of imaginative and of lyric power. He clothed the creatures of his legend with form and sentiments as if they were people who had lived under his roof; and few real men have left such distinct characters as these fictions. And they spoke in language as sweet as it was fit. Yet his talents never seduced him into an ostentation, nor did he harp on one string. An omnipresent humanity co-ordinates all his faculties. Give a man of talents a story to tell, and his partiality

will presently appear. He has certain observations, opinions, topics, which have some accidental prominence, and which he disposes all to exhibit. He crams this part and starves that other part, consulting not the fitness of the thing, but his fitness and strength. But Shakspeare has no peculiarity, no importunate topic; but all is duly given; no veins, no curiosities; no cow-painter, no bird-fancier, no mannerist is he; he has no discoverable egotism: the great he tells greatly; the small, subordinately. He is wise without emphasis or assertion; he is strong, as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other. This makes that equality of power in farce, tragedy, narrative, and love-songs; a merit so incessant that each reader is incredulous of the perception of other readers.

This power of expression, or of transferring the inmost truth of things into music and verse, makes him the type of the poet and has added a new problem to metaphysics. This is that which throws him into natural history, as a main production of the globe, and as announcing new eras and ameliorations. Things were mirrored in his poetry without loss or blur: he could paint the fine with precision, the great with compass, the tragic and the comic indifferently and without any distortion or favor. He carried his powerful execution

into minute details, to a hair point, finishes an eyelash or a dimple as firmly as he draws a mountain; and yet these, like nature's, will bear the scrutiny of the solar microscope.

In short, he is the chief example to prove that more or less of production, more or fewer pictures, is a thing indifferent. He had the power to make one picture. Daguerre learned how to let one flower etch its image on his plate of iodine, and then proceeds at leisure to etch a million. There are always objects; but there was never representation. Here is perfect representation, at last; and now let the world of figures sit for their portraits. No recipe can be given for the making of a Shakspeare; but the possibility of the translation of things into song is demonstrated.

His lyric power lies in the genius of the piece. The sonnets, though their excellence is lost in the splendor of the dramas, are as inimitable as they; and it is not a merit of lines, but a total merit of the piece; like the tone of voice of some incomparable person, so is this a speech of poetic beings, and any clause as unproducible now as a whole poem.

Though the speeches in the plays, and single lines, have a beauty which tempts the ear to pause on them for their euphuism, yet the sentence is so loaded with meaning and so linked with its foregoers and followers, that the logician is satisfied. His means are as admir-

able as his ends; every subordinate invention, by which he helps himself to connect some irreconcilable opposites, is a poem too. He is not reduced to dismount and walk because his horses are running off with him in some distant direction: he always rides.

The finest poetry was first experience; but the thought has suffered a transformation since it was an experience. Cultivated men often attain a good degree of skill in writing verses; but it is easy to read, through their poems, their personal history: any one acquainted with the parties can name every figure; this is Andrew and that is Rachel. The sense thus remains prosaic. It is a caterpillar with wings, and not yet a butterfly. In the poet's mind the fact has gone quite over into the new element of thought, and has lost all that is exuvial. This generosity abides with Shakspeare. We say, from the truth and closeness of his pictures, that he knows the lesson by heart. Yet there is not a trace of egotism.

One more royal trait properly belongs to the poet. I mean his cheerfulness, without which no man can be a poet, — for beauty is his aim. He loves virtue, not for its obligation but for its grace: he delights in the world, in man, in woman, for the lovely light that sparkles from them. Beauty, the spirit of joy and hilarity, he sheds over the universe. Epicurus relates that poetry hath such charms that a lover might for-

sake his mistress to partake of them. And the true bards have been noted for their firm and cheerful temper. Homer lies in sunshine; Chaucer is glad and erect; and Saadi says, "It was rumored abroad that I was penitent; but what had I to do with repentance?" Not less sovereign and cheerful, — much more sovereign and cheerful, is the tone of Shakspeare. His name suggests joy and emancipation to the heart of men. If he should appear in any company of human souls, who would not march in his troop? He touches nothing that does not borrow health and longevity from his festal style.

And now, how stands the account of man with this bard and benefactor, when, in solitude, shutting our ears to the reverberations of his fame, we seek to strike the balance? Solitude has austere lessons; it can teach us to spare both heroes and poets; and it weighs Shakspeare also, and finds him to share the halfness and imperfection of humanity.

Shakspeare, Homer, Dante, Chaucer, saw the splendor of meaning that plays over the visible world; knew that a tree had another use than for apples, and corn another than for meal, and the ball of the earth, than for tillage and roads: that these things bore a second and finer harvest to the mind, being emblems of its thoughts, and conveying in all their natural history a certain mute

commentary on human life. Shakspeare employed them as colors to compose his picture. He rested in their beauty; and never took the step which seemed inevitable to such genius, namely, to explore the virtue which resides in these symbols and imparts this power: — what is that which they themselves say? He converted the elements which waited on his command, into entertainments. He was master of the revels to mankind. Is it not as if one should have, through majestic powers of science, the comets given into his hand, or the planets and their moons, and should draw them from their orbits to glare with the municipal fireworks on a holiday night, and advertise in all towns, "Very superior pyrotechny this evening"? Are the agents of nature, and the power to understand them, worth no more than a street serenade, or the breath of a cigar? One remembers again the trumpet-text in the Koran, — "The heavens and the earth and all that is between them, think ye we have created them in jest?" As long as the question is of talent and mental power, the world of men has not his equal to show. But when the question is, to life and its materials and its auxiliaries, how does it profit me? What does it signify? It is but a Twelfth Night, or Midsummer Night's Dream, or Winter Evening's Tale: what signifies another picture more or less? The Egyptian verdict of the Shakspeare Societies comes to mind; that he was a jovial actor and

manager. I cannot marry this fact to his verse. Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their thought; but this man, in wide contrast. Had he been less, had he reached only the common measure of great authors, of Bacon, Milton, Tasso, Cervantes, we might leave the fact in the twilight of human fate: but that this man of men, he who gave to the science of mind a new and larger subject than had ever existed, and planted the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into Chaos, — that he should not be wise for himself; — it must even go into the world's history that the best poet led an obscure and profane life, using his genius for the public amusement.

Well, other men, priest and prophet, Israelite, German and Swede, beheld the same objects: they also saw through them that which was contained. And to what purpose? The beauty straightway vanished; they read commandments, all-excluding mountainous duty; an obligation, a sadness, as of piled mountains, fell on them, and life became ghastly, joyless, a pilgrim's progress, a probation, beleaguered round with doleful histories of Adam's fall and curse behind us; with doomsdays and purgatorial and penal fires before us; and the heart of the seer and the heart of the listener sank in them.

It must be conceded that these are half-views of half-men. The world still wants its poet-priest, a reconciler, who shall not trifle, with Shakspeare the player, nor

shall grope in graves, with Swedenborg the mourner; but who shall see, speak, and act, with equal inspiration. For knowledge will brighten the sunshine; right is more beautiful than private affection; and love is compatible with universal wisdom.

JOHN MILTON: POET AND PATRIOT.

1608–1674.

JOHN MILTON: POET AND PATRIOT.[1]

By THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

TOWARD the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, deputy keeper of the state-papers, in the course of his researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton while he filled the office of secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish Trials and the Rye-house Plot. The whole was wrapped up in an envelope, subscribed *To Mr. Skinner, Merchant.* On examination, the large manuscript proved to be the long lost essay on the doctrines of Christianity, which, according to Wood and Toland, Milton finished after the Restoration, and deposited with Cyriac Skinner. Skinner, it is well known, held the same political opinions with his illustrious friend. It is therefore probable, as Mr. Lemon conjectures, that he may have fallen under the

[1] *Joannis Miltoni, Angli, de Doctrinâ Christianâ libri duo posthumi.* A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone. By JOHN MILTON, translated from the Original by Charles R. Sumner, M.A., etc., etc.: 1825. From the *Edinburgh Review*, August, 1825; slightly abridged.

suspicions of the Government during that persecution of the Whigs which followed the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, and that, in consequence of a general seizure of his papers, this work may have been brought to the office in which it has been found. But whatever the adventures of the manuscript may have been, no doubt can exist that it is a genuine relic of the great poet. . . .

The book itself will not add much to the fame of Milton. . . . Were it far more orthodox or far more heretical than it is, it would not much edify or corrupt the present generation. The men of our time are not to be converted or perverted by quartos. A few more days, and this essay will follow the *Defensio Populi* to the dust and silence of the upper shelf. The name of its author, and the remarkable circumstances attending its publication, will secure to it a certain degree of attention. For a month or two it will occupy a few minutes of chat in every drawing-room, and a few columns in every magazine; and it will then, to borrow the elegant language of the play-bills, be withdrawn, to make room for the forth-coming novelties.

We wish, however, to avail ourselves of the interest, transient as it may be, which this work has excited. The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint till they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some

relic of him — a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilized world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art. His detractors, however, though outvoted, have not been silenced. There are many critics, and some of great name, who contrive in the same breath to extol the poems and to decry the poet. The works, they acknowledge, considered in themselves, may be classed among the noblest productions of the human mind. But they will not allow the author to rank with those great men who, born in the infancy of civilization, supplied, by their own powers, the want of instruction, and, though destitute of models themselves, bequeathed

to posterity models which defy imitation. Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions in consideration of these advantages.

We venture to say, on the contrary, paradoxical as the remark may appear, that no poet has ever had to struggle with more unfavorable circumstances than Milton. He doubted, as he has himself owned, whether he had not been born "an age too late." For this notion Johnson has thought fit to make him the butt of much clumsy ridicule. The poet, we believe, understood the nature of his art better than the critic. He knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilization which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.

We think that, as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. Therefore, though we fervently admire those great works of imagination which have appeared in dark ages, we do not admire them the more because they have appeared in dark ages. On the contrary, we hold that the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius is a great poem produced in a civilized age. We cannot understand why those who believe in

that most orthodox article of literary faith, that the earliest poets are generally the best, should wonder at the rule as if it were the exception. Surely the uniformity of the phenomenon indicates a corresponding uniformity in the cause.

The fact is, that common observers reason from the progress of the experimental sciences to that of the imitative arts. The improvement of the former is gradual and slow. Ages are spent in collecting materials, ages more in separating and combining them. Even when a system has been formed, there is still something to add, to alter, or to reject. Every generation enjoys the use of a vast hoard bequeathed to it by antiquity, and transmits that hoard, augmented by fresh acquisitions, to future ages. In these pursuits, therefore, the first speculators lie under great disadvantages, and, even when they fail, are entitled to praise. Their pupils, with far inferior intellectual powers, speedily surpass them in actual attainments. Every girl who has read Mrs. Marcet's little dialogues on political economy could teach Montague or Walpole many lessons in finance. Any intelligent man may now, by resolutely applying himself for a few years to mathematics, learn more than the great Newton knew after half a century of study and meditation.

But it is not thus with music, with painting, or with sculpture. Still less is it thus with poetry. The prog-

ress of refinement rarely supplies these arts with better objects of imitation. It may indeed improve the instruments which are necessary to the mechanical operations of the musician, the sculptor, and the painter. But language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical.

This change in the language of men is partly the cause and partly the effect of a corresponding change in the nature of their intellectual operations, of a change by which science gains and poetry loses. Generalization is necessary to the advancement of knowledge; but particularity is indispensable to the creations of the imagination. In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals and more at classes. They therefore make better theories and worse poems. They give us vague phrases instead of images, and personified qualities instead of men. They may be better able to analyze human nature than their predecessors. But analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect. He may believe in a moral sense, like Shaftesbury; he may refer all human actions to self-interest, like Helvetius; or he may never think about the matter at all. His

creed on such subjects will no more influence his poetry, properly so called, than the notions which a painter may have conceived respecting the lachrymal glands, or the circulation of the blood, will affect the tears of his Niobe, or the blushes of his Aurora. If Shakespeare had written a book on the motives of human actions, it is by no means certain that it would have been a good one. It is extremely improbable that it would have contained half so much able reasoning on the subject as is to be found in the Fable of the Bees. But could Mandeville have created an Iago? Well as he knew how to resolve characters into their elements, would he have been able to combine those elements in such a manner as to make up a man — a real, living, individual man?

Perhaps no person can be a poet, or can even enjoy poetry, without a certain unsoundness of mind, if anything which gives so much pleasure ought to be called unsoundness. By poetry we mean not all writing in verse, nor even all good writing in verse. Our definition excludes many metrical compositions which, on other grounds, deserve the highest praise. By poetry we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colors. Thus the greatest of poets has described it, in lines universally admired for the vigor

and felicity of their diction, and still more valuable on account of the just notion which they convey of the art in which he excelled: —

> "As imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

These are the fruits of the "fine frenzy" which he ascribes to the poet — a fine frenzy, doubtless, but still a frenzy. Truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness. The reasonings are just; but the premises are false. After the first suppositions have been made, everything ought to be consistent; but those first suppositions require a degree of credulity which almost amounts to a partial and temporary derangement of the intellect. Hence of all people children are the most imaginative. They abandon themselves without reserve to every illusion. Every image which is strongly presented to their mental eye produces on them the effect of reality. No man, whatever his sensibility may be, is ever affected by Hamlet or Lear as a little girl is affected by the story of poor Red Riding-hood. She knows that it is all false, that wolves cannot speak, that there are no wolves in England. Yet, in spite of her knowledge, she believes; she weeps; she trembles; she dares not go into a dark room lest she should feel the teeth of the monster at

her throat. Such is the despotism of the imagination over uncultivated minds.

In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even of good ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create. They will talk about the old poets, and comment on them, and to a certain degree enjoy them. But they will scarcely be able to conceive the effect which poetry produced on their ruder ancestors, the agony, the ecstasy, the plenitude of belief. The Greek rhapsodists, according to Plato, could scarce recite Homer without falling into convulsions. The Mohawk hardly feels the scalping-knife while he shouts his death-song. The power which the ancient bards of Wales and Germany exercised over their auditors seems to modern readers almost miraculous. Such feelings are very rare in a civilized community, and most rare among those who participate most in its improvements. They linger longest among the peasantry.

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of

the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite, and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter. We cannot unite the incompatible advantages of reality and deception, the clear discernment of truth and the exquisite enjoyment of fiction.

He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He must unlearn much of that knowledge which has, perhaps, constituted hitherto his chief title to superiority. His very talents will be a hinderance to him. His difficulties will be proportioned to his proficiency in the pursuits which are fashionable among his contemporaries; and that proficiency will in general be proportioned to the vigor and activity of his mind. And it is well if, after all his sacrifices and exertions, his works do not resemble a lisping man or a modern ruin. We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labor, and long meditation employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.

If these reasonings be just, no poet has ever triumphed over greater difficulties than Milton. He received a learned education: he was a profound and elegant classical scholar: he had studied all the mysteries of rabbinical literature: he was intimately acquainted with every language in modern Europe from which either pleasure or information was then to be derived. He was perhaps the only poet of later times who has been distinguished by the excellence of his Latin verse. The genius of Petrarch was scarcely of the first order; and his poems in the ancient language, though much praised by those who have never read them, are wretched compositions. Cowley, with all his admirable wit and ingenuity, had little imagination: nor, indeed, do we think his classical diction comparable to that of Milton. The authority of Johnson is against us on this point. But Johnson had studied the bad writers of the Middle Ages till he had become utterly insensible to the Augustan elegance, and was as ill-qualified to judge between two Latin styles as an habitual drunkard to set up for a wine-taster.

Versification in a dead language is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are in general as ill-suited to the production of vigorous native poetry as the flower-pots of a hot-house to the growth of oaks.

That the author of the Paradise Lost should have written the epistle to Manso was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton the artificial manner indispensable to such works is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, his genius gives to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel:—

> "About him exercised heroic games
> The unarmed youth of heaven. But o'er their heads
> Celestial armory, shield, helm, and spear,
> Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold."

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.

It is not our intention to attempt anything like a complete examination of the poetry of Milton. The public

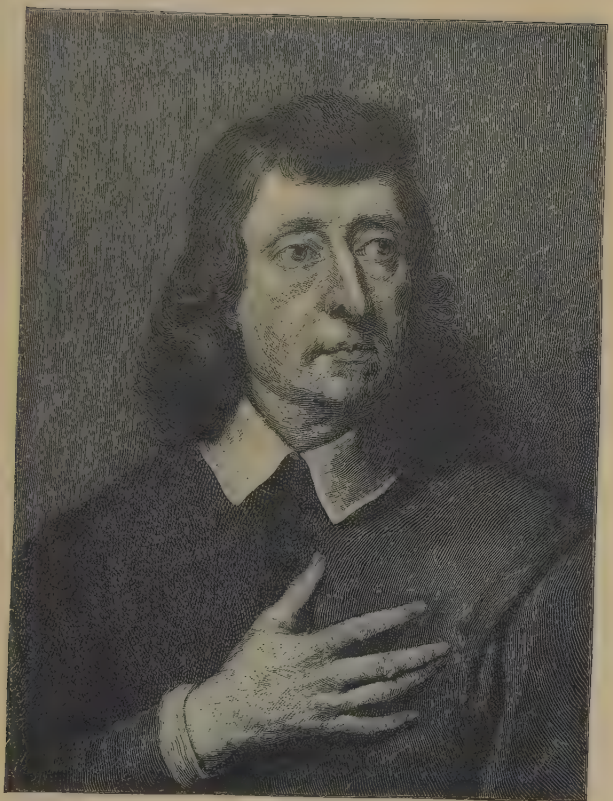
has long been agreed as to the merit of the most remarkable passages, the incomparable harmony of the numbers, and the excellence of that style which no rival has been able to equal and no parodist to degrade; which displays in their highest perfection the idiomatic powers of the English tongue, and to which every ancient and every modern language has contributed something of grace, of energy, or of music. In the vast field of criticism on which we are entering, innumerable reapers have already put their sickles. Yet the harvest is so abundant that the negligent search of a straggling gleaner may be rewarded with a sheaf.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests; not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the Iliad. Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed unless the mind of the reader cooperate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He

sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry. The expression in general means nothing; but, applied to the writings of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced, than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentence; substitute one synonyme for another, and the whole effect is destroyed. The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying "Open Wheat," "Open Barley," to the door that obeyed no sound but "Open Sesame." The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the Paradise Lost is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations, we may remark that scarcely any passages in the poems of Milton are more generally known or more frequently repeated than those which are little more than muster-rolls of names. They



After the painting by Pieter Van der Plaas, National Portrait Gallery, London

JOHN MILTON

are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling-place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school-room, the dog-eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalrous romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamoured knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the Allegro and the Penseroso. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as ottar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close-packed essence from the thin, diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza.

The Comus and the Samson Agonistes are works which, though of very different merit, offer some marked points of resemblance. Both are lyric poems in the form of plays. There are perhaps no two kinds of composition so essentially dissimilar as the drama and the ode. The business of the dramatist is to keep himself out of sight, and to let nothing appear but his characters. As soon as he attracts notice to his personal feelings, the illusion is broken. The effect is as unpleasant as that which is produced on the stage by the voice of a prompter or the entrance of a scene-shifter. Hence it was that the tragedies of Byron were his least successful performances. They resemble those pasteboard pictures invented by the friend of children, Mr. Newbery, in which a single movable head goes round twenty different bodies, so that the same face looks out upon us successively, from the uniform of a hussar, the furs of a judge, and the rags of a beggar. In all the characters, patriots and tyrants, haters and lovers, the frown and sneer of Harold were discernible in an instant. But this species of egotism, though fatal to the drama, is the inspiration of the ode. It is the part of the lyric poet to abandon himself, without reserve, to his own emotions.

Between these hostile elements many great men have endeavored to effect an amalgamation, but never with complete success. The Greek drama, on the model of

which the Samson was written, sprang from the ode. The dialogue was ingrafted on the chorus, and naturally partook of its character. The genius of the greatest of the Athenian dramatists, co-operated with the circumstances under which tragedy made its first appearance. Æschylus was, head and heart, a lyric poet. In his time, the Greeks had far more intercourse with the East than in the days of Homer; and they had not yet acquired that immense superiority in war, in science, and in the arts, which, in the following generation, led them to treat the Asiatics with contempt. From the narrative of Herodotus it should seem that they still looked up, with the veneration of disciples, to Egypt and Assyria. At this period, accordingly, it was natural that the literature of Greece should be tinctured with the Oriental style. And that style, we think, is discernible in the works of Pindar and Æschylus. The latter often reminds us of the Hebrew writers. The Book of Job, indeed, in conduct and diction, bears a considerable resemblance to some of his dramas. Considered as plays, his works are absurd; considered as choruses they are above all praise. If, for instance, we examine the address of Clytemnestra to Agamemnon on his return, or the description of the seven Argive chiefs, by the principles of dramatic writing, we shall instantly condemn them as monstrous. But if we forget the characters, and think only of the poetry, we shall admit that it has

never been surpassed in energy and magnificence. Sophocles made the Greek drama as dramatic as was consistent with its original form. His portraits of men have a sort of similarity; but it is the similarity, not of a painting, but of a bass-relief. It suggests a resemblance; but it does not produce an illusion. Euripides attempted to carry the reform further. But it was a task far beyond his powers, perhaps beyond any powers. Instead of correcting what was bad, he destroyed what was excellent. He substituted crutches for stilts, bad sermons for good odes.

Milton, it is well known, admired Euripides highly, much more highly than, in our opinion, Euripides deserved. Indeed, the caresses which this partiality leads our countryman to bestow on "sad Electra's poet" sometimes remind us of the beautiful Queen of Fairy-land kissing the long ears of Bottom. At all events, there can be no doubt that this veneration for the Athenian, whether just or not, was injurious to the Samson Agonistes. Had Milton taken Æschylus for his model, he would have given himself up to the lyric inspiration, and poured out profusely all the treasures of his mind, without bestowing a thought on those dramatic properties which the nature of the work rendered it impossible to preserve. In the attempt to reconcile things in their own nature inconsistent he has failed, as every one else must have failed. We cannot identify ourselves with

the characters, as in a good play. We cannot identify ourselves with the poet, as in a good ode. The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralize each other. We are by no means insensible to the merits of this celebrated piece, to the severe dignity of the style, the graceful and pathetic solemnity of the opening speech, or the wild and barbaric melody which gives so striking an effect to the choral passages. But we think it, we confess, the least successful effort of the genius of Milton.

The Comus is framed on the model of the Italian Masque, as the Samson is framed on the model of the Greek Tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language. It is as far superior to The Faithful Shepherdess, as The Faithful Shepherdess is to the Aminta, or the Aminta to the Pastor Fido. It was well for Milton that he had here no Euripides to mislead him. He understood and loved the literature of modern Italy. But he did not feel for it the same veneration which he entertained for the remains of Athenian and Roman poetry, consecrated by so many lofty and endearing recollections. The faults, moreover, of his Italian predecessors were of a kind to which his mind had a deadly antipathy. He could stoop to a plain style, sometimes even to a bald style; but false brilliancy was his utter aversion. His muse had no objection to a russet attire; but she turned

with disgust from the finery of Guarini, as tawdry and as paltry as the rags of a chimney-sweeper on May-day. Whatever ornaments she wears are of massive gold, not only dazzling to the sight, but capable of standing the severest test of the crucible.

Milton attended in the Comus to the distinction which he afterward neglected in the Samson. He made his Masque what it ought to be, essentially lyrical, and dramatic only in semblance. He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent in the nature of that species of composition; and he has therefore succeeded, wherever success was not impossible. The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies; and he who so reads them will be enraptured with their eloquence, their sublimity, and their music. The interruptions of the dialogue, however, impose a constraint upon the writer, and break the illusion of the reader. The finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit. "I should much commend," says the excellent Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to Milton, "the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto, I must plainly confess to you, I have seen yet nothing parallel in our language." The criticism was just. It is when Milton escapes from the shackles of the dialogue, when he is discharged from the labor of uniting two incongruous styles, when he is at liberty to

indulge his choral raptures without reserve, that he rises even above himself. Then, like his own good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty; he seems to cry exultingly,

> "Now my task is smoothly done,
> I can fly or I can run,"

to skim the earth, to soar above the clouds, to bathe in the Elysian dew of the rainbow, and to inhale the balmy smells of nard and cassia, which the musky winds of the zephyr scatter through the cedared alleys of the Hesperides.

There are several of the minor poems of Milton on which we would willingly make a few remarks. Still more willingly would we enter into a detailed examination of that admirable poem, the Paradise Regained, which, strangely enough, is scarcely ever mentioned except as an instance of the blindness of the parental affection which men of letters bear toward the offspring of their intellects. That Milton was mistaken in preferring this work, excellent as it is, to the Paradise Lost, we readily admit. But we are sure that the superiority of the Paradise Lost to the Paradise Regained is not more decided than the superiority of the Paradise Regained to every poem which has since made its appearance. Our limits, however, prevent us

from discussing the point at length. We hasten on to that extraordinary production which the general suffrage of critics has placed in the highest class of human compositions.

The only poem of modern times which can be compared with the Paradise Lost is the Divine Comedy. The subject of Milton, in some points, resembled that of Dante; but he has treated it in a widely different manner. We cannot, we think, better illustrate our opinion respecting our own great poet than by contrasting him with the father of Tuscan literature.

The poetry of Milton differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. He gives us the shape, the color, the sound, the smell, the taste; he counts the numbers; he measures the size. His similes are the illustrations of a traveller. Unlike those of other poets, and especially of Milton, they are introduced in a plain, business-like manner; not for the sake of any beauty in the objects from which

they are drawn; not for the sake of any ornament which they may impart to the poem; but simply in order to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself. The ruins of the precipice which led from the sixth to the seventh circle of hell were like those of the rock which fell into the Adige on the south of Trent. The cataract of Phlegethon was like that of Aqua Cheta at the Monastery of St. Benedict. The place where the heretics were confined in burning tombs resembled the vast cemetery of Arles.

Now let us compare with the exact details of Dante the dim intimations of Milton. We will cite a few examples. The English poet has never thought of taking the measure of Satan. He gives us merely a vague idea of vast bulk. In one passage the fiend lies stretched out huge in length, floating many a rood, equal in size to the earth-born enemies of Jove, or to the sea-monster which the mariner mistakes for an island. When he addresses himself to battle against the guardian angels he stands like Teneriffe or Atlas: his stature reaches the sky. Contrast with these descriptions the lines in which Dante has described the gigantic spectre of Nimrod. "His face seemed to me as long and as broad as the ball of St. Peter's at Rome; and his other limbs were in proportion; so that the bank, which concealed him from the waist downwards, nevertheless showed so much of him that three tall Germans would

in vain have attempted to reach to his hair." We are sensible that we do no justice to the admirable style of the Florentine poet. But Mr. Cary's translation is not at hand; and our version, however rude, is sufficient to illustrate our meaning.

Once more, compare the lazar-house in the eleventh book of the Paradise Lost with the last ward of Malebolge in Dante. Milton avoids the loathsome details, and takes refuge in indistinct but solemn and tremendous imagery — Despair hurrying from couch to couch to mock the wretches with his attendance, Death shaking his dart over them, but, in spite of supplications, delaying to strike. What says Dante? "There was such a moan there as there would be if all the sick who, between July and September, are in the hospitals of Valdichiana, and of the Tuscan swamps, and of Sardinia, were in one pit together; and such a stench was issuing forth as is wont to issue from decayed limbs."

We will not take upon ourselves the invidious office of settling precedency between two such writers. Each in his own department is incomparable; and each, we may remark, has wisely, or fortunately, taken a subject adapted to exhibit his peculiar talent to the greatest advantage. The Divine Comedy is a personal narrative. Dante is the eye-witness and ear-witness of that which he relates. He is the very man who has heard

the tormented spirits crying out for the second death, who has read the dusky characters on the portal within which there is no hope, who has hidden his face from the terrors of the Gorgon, who has fled from the hooks and the seething pitch of Barbariccia and Draghignazzo. His own hands have grasped the shaggy sides of Lucifer. His own feet have climbed the mountain of expiation. His own brow has been marked by the purifying angel. The reader would throw aside such a tale in incredulous disgust, unless it were told with the strongest air of veracity, with a sobriety even in its horrors, with the greatest precision and multiplicity in its details. The narrative of Milton in this respect differs from that of Dante as the adventures of Amadis differ from those of Gulliver. The author of Amadis would have made his book ridiculous if he had introduced those minute particulars which give such a charm to the work of Swift, the nautical observations, the affected delicacy about names, the official documents transcribed at full length, and all the unmeaning gossip and scandal of the court, springing out of nothing, and tending to nothing. We are not shocked at being told that a man who lived, nobody knows when, saw many very strange sights, and we can easily abandon ourselves to the illusion of the romance. But when Lemuel Gulliver, surgeon, resident at Rotherhithe, tells us of pigmies and giants, flying

islands, and philosophizing horses, nothing but such circumstantial touches could produce for a single moment a deception on the imagination.

Of all the poets who have introduced into their works the agency of supernatural beings, Milton has succeeded best. Here Dante decidedly yields to him; and as this is a point on which many rash and ill-considered judgments have been pronounced, we feel inclined to dwell on it a little longer. The most fatal error which a poet can possibly commit in the management of his machinery is that of attempting to philosophize too much. Milton has been often censured for ascribing to spirits many functions of which spirits must be incapable. But these objections, though sanctioned by eminent names, originate, we venture to say, in profound ignorance of the art of poetry.

What is spirit? What are our own minds, the portion of spirit with which we are best acquainted? We observe certain phenomena. We cannot explain them into material causes. We therefore infer that there exists something which is not material. But of this something we have no idea. We can define it only by negatives. We can reason about it only by symbols. We use the word, but we have no image of the thing; and the business of poetry is with images, and not with words. The poet uses words, indeed; but they are merely the instruments of his art, not its objects. They

are the materials which he is to dispose in such a manner as to present a picture to the mental eye. And if they are not so disposed, they are no more entitled to be called poetry than a bale of canvas and a box of colors to be called a painting.

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of gods and goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The history of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers.

A philosopher might admire so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the Portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust. Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars. St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite

a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

From these considerations, we infer that no poet who should affect that metaphysical accuracy for the want of which Milton has been blamed would escape a disgraceful failure. Still, however, there was another extreme which, though far less dangerous, was also to be avoided. The imaginations of men are in a great measure under the control of their opinions. The most exquisite art of poetical coloring can produce no illusion when it is employed to represent that which is at once perceived to be incongruous and absurd. Milton wrote in an age of philosophers and theologians. It was necessary, therefore, for him to abstain from giving such a shock to their understandings as might break the charm which it was his object to throw over their imaginations. This is the real explanation of the indistinctness and inconsistency with which he has often been reproached. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that it was absolutely necessary that the spirit should be clothed with material forms. "But," says he, "the poet should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight, and seducing the reader to drop it from his thoughts." This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their thoughts? What if

the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half-belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case. It was impossible for the poet to adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system. He therefore took his stand on the debatable ground. He left the whole in ambiguity. He has doubtless, by so doing, laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency. But, though philosophically in the wrong, we cannot but believe that he was poetically in the right. This task, which almost any other writer would have found impracticable, was easy to him. The peculiar art which he possessed of communicating his meaning circuitously through a long succession of associated ideas, and of intimating more than he expressed, enabled him to disguise those incongruities which he could not avoid.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so. That of Dante is picturesque, indeed, beyond any that ever was written. Its effect approaches to that produced by the pencil or the chisel. But it is picturesque to the exclusion of all mystery. This is a fault on the right side, a fault inseparable from the plan of Dante's poem, which, as we have already observed, rendered the utmost accuracy of description necessary. Still it is a fault. The supernatural

agents excite an interest; but it is not the interest which is proper to supernatural agents. We feel that we could talk to the ghosts and demons without any emotion of unearthly awe. We could, like Don Juan, ask them to supper, and eat heartily in their company. Dante's angels are good men with wings. His devils are spiteful, ugly executioners. His dead men are merely living men in strange situations. The scene which passes between the poet and Farinata is justly celebrated. Still, Farinata in the burning tomb is exactly what Farinata would have been at an *auto-da-fé*. Nothing can be more touching than the first interview of Dante and Beatrice. Yet what is it but a lovely woman chiding, with sweet, austere composure, the lover for whose affection she is grateful, but whose vices she reprobates? The feelings which give the passage its charm would suit the streets of Florence as well as the summit of the Mount of Purgatory.

The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers. His fiends, in particular, are wonderful creations. They are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails, none of the fee-faw-fum of Tasso and Klopstock. They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings. Their characters are, like their forms, marked by a certain dim resemblance to those of men,

but exaggerated to gigantic dimensions, and veiled in mysterious gloom.

Perhaps the gods and demons of Æschylus may best bear a comparison with the angels and devils of Milton. The style of the Athenian had, as we have remarked, something of the Oriental character; and the same peculiarity may be traced in his mythology. It has nothing of the amenity and elegance which we generally find in the superstitions of Greece. All is rugged, barbaric, and colossal. The legends of Æschylus seem to harmonize less with the fragrant groves and graceful porticos in which his countrymen paid their vows to the God of Light and Goddess of Desire than with those huge and grotesque labyrinths of eternal granite in which Egypt enshrined her mystic Osiris, or in which Hindostan still bows down to her seven-headed idols. His favorite gods are those of the elder generation, the sons of heaven and earth, compared with whom Jupiter himself was a stripling and an upstart, the gigantic Titans, and the inexorable Furies. Foremost among his creations of this class stands Prometheus, half fiend, half redeemer, the friend of man, the sullen and implacable enemy of heaven. Prometheus bears undoubtedly a considerable resemblance to the Satan of Milton. In both we find the same impatience of control, the same ferocity, the same unconquerable pride. In both characters also are mingled, though in

very different proportions, some kind and generous feelings. Prometheus, however, is hardly superhuman enough. He talks too much of his chains and his uneasy posture; he is rather too much depressed and agitated. His resolution seems to depend on the knowledge which he possesses that he holds the fate of his torturer in his hands, and that the hour of his release will surely come. But Satan is a creature of another sphere. The might of his intellectual nature is victorious over the extremity of pain. Amidst agonies which cannot be conceived without horror, he deliberates, resolves, and even exults. Against the sword of Michael, against the thunder of Jehovah, against the flaming lake, and the marl burning with solid fire, against the prospect of an eternity of unintermitted misery, his spirit bears up unbroken, resting on its own innate energies, requiring no support from anything external, nor even from hope itself.

To return for a moment to the parallel which we have been attempting to draw between Milton and Dante, we would add that the poetry of these great men has in a considerable degree taken its character from their moral qualities. They are not egotists. They rarely obtrude their idiosyncrasies on their readers. They have nothing in common with those modern beggars for fame who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced by exposing the

nakedness and sores of their minds. Yet it would be difficult to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, colored by their personal feelings.

The character of Milton was peculiarly distinguished by loftiness of spirit; that of Dante by intensity of feeling. In every line of the Divine Comedy we discern the asperity which is produced by pride struggling with misery. There is perhaps no work in the world so deeply and uniformly sorrowful. The melancholy of Dante was no fantastic caprice. It was not, as far as at this distance of time can be judged, the effect of external circumstances. It was from within. Neither love nor glory, neither the conflicts of earth nor the hope of heaven, could dispel it. It turned every consolation and every pleasure into its own nature. It resembled that noxious Sardinian soil of which the intense bitterness is said to have been perceptible even in its honey. His mind was, in the noble language of the Hebrew poet, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light was as darkness." The gloom of his character discolors all the passions of men, and all the face of nature, and tinges with its own livid hue the flowers of Paradise and the glories of the eternal throne. All the portraits of him are singularly characteristic. No person can look on the features, noble even to ruggedness — the dark furrows

of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the eye the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip — and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.

Milton was, like Dante, a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pander in the style of a bellman, were now the favorite writers of the Sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these that fair Muse was placed, like the chaste lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at, by the whole rout of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man, they might have been excused in Milton.

But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic afflictions, nor political disappointments, nor abuse, nor proscription, nor neglect had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no sufferings could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die.

Hence it was that, though he wrote the Paradise Lost at a time of life when images of beauty and tenderness are in general beginning to fade, even from those minds in which they have not been effaced by anxiety and disappointment, he adorned it with all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and in the moral world. Neither Theocritus nor Ariosto had a finer or a more healthful sense of the pleasantness of external objects, or loved better to luxuriate amidst sunbeams and flowers, the songs of nightingales, the juice of summer fruits, and the coolness of shady fountains. His conception of love unites all the voluptuousness of the

Oriental harem, and all the gallantry of the chivalric tournament with all the pure and quiet affection of an English fireside. His poetry reminds us of the miracles of Alpine scenery. Nooks and dells, beautiful as fairy-land, are embosomed in its most rugged and gigantic elevations. The roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of the avalanche.

Traces, indeed, of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works; but it is most strongly displayed in the Sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been undervalued by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaja in the thought, none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an expected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed forever, led him to musings, which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterize these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology, or perhaps still more of the Collects of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the massacres of Piedmont is strictly a collect in verse.

The Sonnets are more or less striking, according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are, almost without exception, dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would, indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though perhaps most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.

His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of spirit so high and of an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes, liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled

an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.

Of those principles, then struggling for their infant existence, Milton was the most devoted and eloquent literary champion. We need not say how much we admire his public conduct. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a large portion of his countrymen still think it unjustifiable. The civil war, indeed, has been more discussed, and is less understood, than any event in English history. The friends of liberty labored under the disadvantage of which the lion in the fable complained so bitterly. Though they were the conquerors, their enemies were the painters. As a body, the Roundheads had done their utmost to decry and ruin literature; and literature was even with them, as, in the long run, it always is with its enemies. The best book on their side of the question is the charming narrative of Mrs. Hutchinson. May's History of the Parliament is good; but it breaks off at the most interesting crisis of the struggle. The performance of Ludlow is foolish and violent; and most of the later writers who have espoused the same cause — Oldmixon, for instance, and Catherine Macaulay — have, to say the least, been more distinguished by zeal than either by candor or by skill. On the other side are the most authoritative and the most popular historical works in our language, that of

Clarendon, and that of Hume. The former is not only ably written and full of valuable information, but has also an air of dignity and sincerity which makes even the prejudices and errors with which it abounds respectable. Hume, from whose fascinating narrative the great mass of the reading public are still contented to take their opinions, hated religion so much that he hated liberty for having been allied with religion, and has pleaded the cause of tyranny with the dexterity of an advocate while affecting the impartiality of a judge.

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned according as the resistance of the people to Charles the First shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. . . .

Every man who approves of the Revolution of 1688 [which dethroned James II., son of Charles I., on the ground that he "had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom," and enthroned William of Orange in his stead], must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this: Had Charles the First broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative, unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the king himself. If there be any truth in any historian

of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament, had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion mention one act of James the Second to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two Houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of Parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of Parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate; the right of petition was grossly violated; arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the Great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms, and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the Parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship-money had

been given up. The Star-chamber had been abolished. Provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He too had offered to call a free parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had, no doubt, passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives; but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind, a man who made and broke promises with equal facility, a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared to the conduct of

Charles with respect to the Petition of Right. The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another Parliament; another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?* Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they

would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed

that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man, but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because their privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors. This point Hume has labored, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short,

clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them. But those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford. They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the Scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers revelling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy-men shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag;

all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the civil war. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of these outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people; and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have

been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our civil war. The heads of the Church and State reaped only that which they had sown. The Government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a Northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres. It is said that when soldiers in such a situation find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, scepticism on points the most

clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance; and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces; and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half-blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce; and at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood by the cause of public

liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favorite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the King. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still, we must say, in justice to the many eminent persons who, concurred in it, and in justice, more particularly, to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputations which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides. . . .

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy;" but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage: his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father: they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with

feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. . . .

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell, — his conduct during the administration of the Protector. That an enthusiastic votary of liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament,

After the painting by T. Lessi

MILTON VISITS THE AGED GALILEO AT THE VILLA D'ARCETRI, NEAR FLORENCE

and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions, were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon. For himself he demanded indeed the first place in the commonwealth; but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder, or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a veto on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his parlia-

ments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then, it must be acknowledged, he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honor been better upheld

abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government, and the Humble Petition and Advice, were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents, sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the policy of the State. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And, for that purpose, it is necessary to

take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion, every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of camp-followers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose; who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spat in his face in 1649; who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated at Westminster Hall and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads, or stuck up oak-branches, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and

malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learned. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

> "Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
> Che mortali perigli in se contiene:
> Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,
> Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene."

Those who roused the people to resistance; who directed their measures through a long series of

eventful years; who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen; who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy; who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth — were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles the First, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles the Second was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the Death's head and the Fool's head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him,

was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on his intolerable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but his favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier

creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged; on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion, the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting

whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid his face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or on the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but

never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach; and we know that, in spite of their hatred of popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity, that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathens, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or

careless Gallios with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshippers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candor. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse-boys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the Parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favorable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ, with the mutes who throng their

antechambers, and the Janizaries who mount guard at their gates. Our Royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valor, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honor, the prejudices of childhood, and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red Cross Knight, they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty, while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions, they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries, those qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues, courtesy, generosity,

veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great taskmaster's eye."

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on the Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest sceptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous

jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honor and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as best harmonize with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master, and not the slave. Like the hero of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listened to the song of the Sirens; yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe; but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendor, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the Penseroso, which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything

else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed, in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents; but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honor. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendor still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a forsworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship-money and the Star-chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from liberty of the press and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, over-

looked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the King and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem, who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

> "Oh, ye mistook! Ye should have snatched his wand
> And bound him fast. Without the rod reversed,
> And backward mutters of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the lady that sits here
> Bound in strong fetters fixed and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle; but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system, in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as

a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply-seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear, when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapors, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen repro-

bated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide. He attacked the prevailing systems of education. His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility.

> "Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
> Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi."

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the Paradise Lost has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyrical rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyze the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the Areopagitica and the nervous rhetoric of the Iconoclast and to point out some of those magnificent passages

which occur in the Treatise of Reformation, and the Animadversions on the Remonstrant. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging; that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We imagine to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word, the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it, the earnestness with which we should endeavor to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues, the

eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Elwood, the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize; and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous

efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE.

1749–1832.

GERMANY'S GREATEST WRITER.

GOETHE.[1]

By FREDERIC HENRY HEDGE.

I. THE MAN.

GENIUS of the supreme order presupposes a nature of equal scope as the prime condition of its being. The Gardens of Adonis require little earth, but the oak will not flourish in a tub; and the wine of Tokay is the product of no green-house, nor gotten of sour grapes. Given a genuine great poet, you will find a greater man behind, in whom, among others, these virtues predominate, — courage, generosity, truth.

Pre-eminent among the poets of the modern world stands Goethe, chief of his own generation, challenging comparison with the greatest of all time. His literary activity embraces a span of nigh seventy years in a life of more than fourscore, beginning, significantly enough, with a poem on "Christ's Descent into Hell" (his earliest extant composition), and ending with Faust's — that is, Man's — ascent into heaven.

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[1] From "Hours with the German Classics," by FREDERIC HENRY HEDGE (copyright by him in 1886). With permission of Messrs. LITTLE, BROWN, & Co., Publishers, Boston, Mass.

The rank of a writer — his spiritual import to human kind — may be inferred from the number and worth of the writings of which he has furnished the topic and occasion. "When kings build," says Schiller, speaking of Kant's commentators, "the draymen have plenty to do." Dante and Shakspeare have created whole libraries through the interest inspired by their writings. The Goethe-literature, so-called, — though scarce fifty years have elapsed since the poet's death, — already numbers its hundreds of volumes.

I note in this man, first of all, as a literary phenomenon, the unexampled fact of supreme excellence in several quite distinct provinces of literary action. Had we only his minor poems, he would rank as the first of lyrists. Had he written only "Faust," he would be the first of philosophic poets. Had he written only "Hermann and Dorothea," the sweetest idyllist; if only the "Märchen," the subtlest of allegorists. Had he written never a verse, but only prose, he would hold the highest place among the prose-writers of Germany. And lastly, had he written only on scientific subjects, in that line also — in the field of science — he would be, as he is, an acknowledged leader.

Noticeable in him also is the combination of extraordinary genius with extraordinary fortune. A magnificent person, a sound physique, inherited wealth, high social position, official dignity, with eighty-three years

of earthly existence, compose the framework of this illustrious life.

Behind the author, behind the poet, behind the world-renowned genius, a not unreasonable curiosity seeks the original man, the human individual, as he walked among men, his manner of being, his characteristics, as shown in the converse of life. In what soil grew the flowers and ripened the fruits which have been the delight and the aliment of nations? In proportion, of course, to the eminence attained by a writer, — in proportion to the worth of his works, to their hold on the world, — is the interest felt in his personality and behavior, in the incidents of his life. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the person is not always proportioned to the lustre of the name. Of the two great poets to whom the world's unrepealable verdict has assigned the foremost place in their several kinds, we know in one case absolutely nothing, and next to nothing in the other. To the question, Who sung the wrath of Achilles and the wanderings of the much-versed Odysseus? tradition answers with a name to which no faintest shadow of a person corresponds. To the question, Who composed "Hamlet" and "Othello"? history answers with a person so indistinct that recent speculation has dared to question the agency of Shakspeare in those creations. What would not the old scholiasts have given for satisfactory proofs of the existence of a Homer identical with

the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey? What would not the Shakspeare clubs give for one more authentic anecdote of the world's great dramatist?

Of Goethe we know more — I mean of his externals — than of any other writer of equal note. This is due in part to his wide relations, official and other, with his contemporaries; to his large correspondence with people of note, of which the documents have been preserved by the parties addressed; to the interest felt in him by curious observers living in the day of his greatness. It is due in part also to the fact that, unlike the greatest of his predecessors, he flourished in an all-communicating, all-recording age; and partly it is due to autobiographical notices, embracing important portions of his history.

Two seemingly opposite factors — limiting and qualifying the one the other — determined the course and topics of his life. One was the aim which he proposed to himself as the governing principle and purpose of his being, — to perfect himself, to make the most of the nature which God had given him; the other was a constitutional tendency to come out of himself, to lose himself in objects, especially in natural objects, so that in the study of nature — to which he devoted a large part of his life — he seems not so much a scientific observer as a chosen confidant, to whom the discerning Mother revealed her secrets.

In no greatest genius are all its talents self-derived.

Countless influences mould our intellect and mould our heart. One of these, and often one of the most potent, is heredity. Consciously or unconsciously, for good or for evil, physically and mentally, the father and mother are in the child, as indeed all his ancestors are in every man.

Of Goethe's father we know only what the son himself has told us in his memoirs. A man of austere presence, from whom Goethe, as he tells us, inherited his bodily stature and his serious treatment of life, —

> "Vom Vater hab ich die Statur,
> Des Lebens ernstes führen."

By profession a lawyer, but without practice, living in grim seclusion amid his books and collections; a man of solid acquirements and large culture, who had travelled in Italy and first awakened in Wolfgang the longing for that land; a man of ample means, inhabiting a stately mansion. For the rest, a stiff, narrow-minded, fussy pedant, with small toleration for any methods or aims but his own; who, while he appreciated the superior gifts of his son, was obstinately bent on guiding them in strict professional grooves, and teased him with the friction of opposing wills.

The opposite, in most respects, of this stately and pedantic worthy was the Frau Räthin, his youthful wife, young enough to have been his daughter, — a jocund, exuberant nature, a woman to be loved; one

who blessed society with her presence, and possessed uncommon gifts of discourse. She was but eighteen when Wolfgang was born, — a companion to him and his sister Cornelia; one in whom they were sure to find sympathy and ready indulgence. Goethe was indebted to her, as he tells us, for his joyous spirit and his narrative talent, —

> "Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur
> Und Lust zu fabuliren."

Outside of the poet's household, the most important figure in the circle of his childish acquaintance was his mother's father, from whom he had his name, Johann Wolfgang Textor, the *Schultheiss*, or chief magistrate, of the city. From him Goethe seems to have inherited the superstition of which some curious examples are recorded in his life. He shared with Napoleon and other remarkable men, says Von Müller, the conceit that little mischances are prophetic of greater evils. On a journey to Baden-Baden with a friend, his carriage was upset and his companion slightly injured. He thought it a bad omen, and instead of proceeding to Baden-Baden chose another watering-place for his summer resort. If in his almanac there happened to be a blot on any date, he feared to undertake anything important on the day so marked. He had noted certain fatal days; one of these was the 22d of March. On that day he had lost a valued friend; on that day the theatre to which he

had devoted so much time and labor was burned; and on that day, curiously enough, he died. He believed in oracles; and as Rousseau threw stones at a tree to learn whether or no he was to be saved (the hitting or not hitting the tree was to be the sign), so Goethe tossed a valuable pocket-knife into the river Lahn to ascertain whether he would succeed as a painter. If behind the bushes which bordered the stream, he saw the knife plunge, it should signify success; if not, he would take it as an omen of failure. Rousseau was careful, he tells us, to choose a stout tree, and to stand very near. Goethe, more honest with himself, adopted no such precaution; the plunge of the knife was not seen, and the painter's career was abandoned.

Wordsworth's saying, "the child is the father of the man," — a saying which owes its vitality more to its form than its substance, — is not always verified, or its truth is not always apparent in the lives of distinguished men. I find not much in Goethe the child prophetic of Goethe the man. But the singer and the seeker, the two main tendencies of his being, are already apparent in early life. Of moral traits, the most conspicuous in the child is a power of self-control, — a moral heroism, which secured to him in after life a natural leadership unattainable by mere intellectual supremacy. An instance of this self-control is recorded among the anecdotes of his boyhood. At one of the lessons which he

shared with other boys, the teacher failed to appear. The young people awaited his coming for a while, but toward the close of the hour most of them departed, leaving behind three who were especially hostile to Goethe. "These," he says, "thought to torment, to mortify, and to drive me away. They left me a moment, and returned with rods taken from a broom which they had cut to pieces. I perceived their intention, and, supposing the expiration of the hour to be near, I immediately determined to make no resistance until the clock should strike. Unmercifully, thereupon, they began to scourge in the cruellest manner my legs and calves. I did not stir, but soon felt that I had miscalculated the time, and that such pain greatly lengthens the minutes." When the hour expired, his superior activity enabled him to master all three, and to pin them to the ground.

In later years the same zeal of self-discipline which prompted the child to exercise himself in bearing pain, impelled the man to resist and overcome constitutional weaknesses by force of will. A student of architecture, he conquered a tendency to giddiness by standing on pinnacles and walking on narrow rafters over perilous abysses. In like manner he overcame the ghostly terrors instilled in the nursery, by midnight visits to churchyards and uncanny places.

To real peril, to fear of death, he seems to have

had that native insensibility so notable always in men of genius, in whom the conviction of a higher destiny begets the feeling of a charmed life, — such as Plutarch records of the first Cæsar in peril of shipwreck on the river Anio. In the French campaign (1793), in which Goethe accompanied the Duke of Weimar against the armies of the Republic, a sudden impulse of scientific curiosity prompted him, in spite of warnings and remonstrances, to experiment on what is called the "cannon-fever." For this purpose he rode to a place in which he was exposed to a cross-fire of the two armies, and coolly watched the sensations experienced in that place of peril.

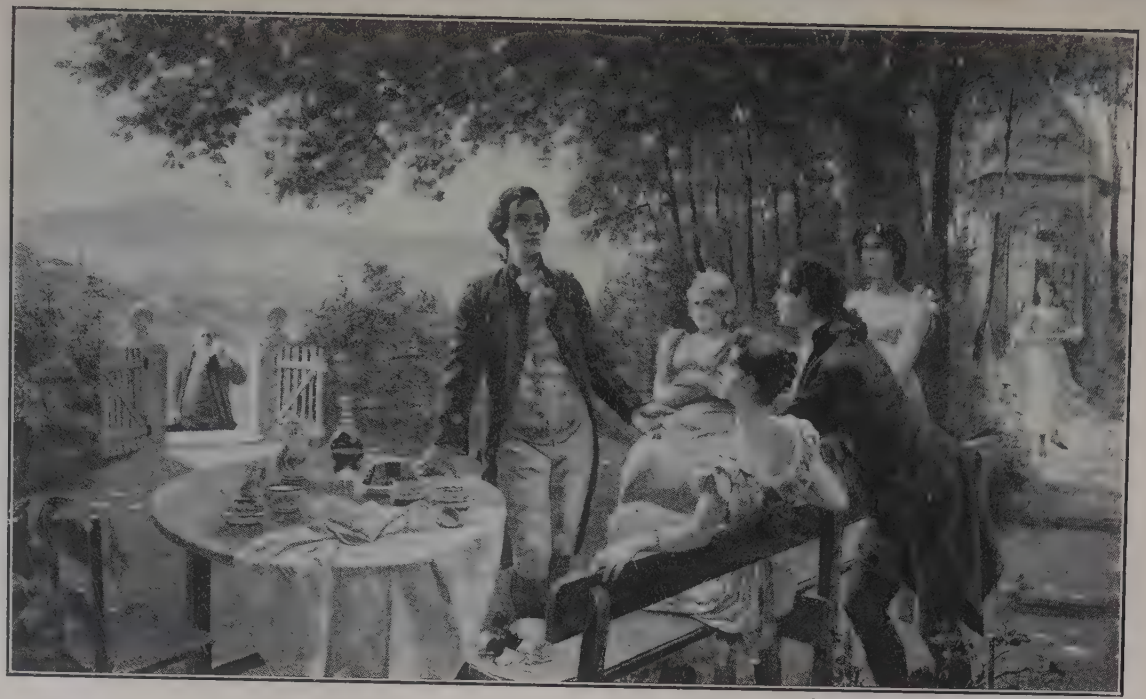
Command of himself, acquired by long and systematic discipline, gave him that command over others which he exercised in several memorable instances. Coming from a ball one night, — a young man fresh from the University, — he saw that a fire had broken out in the Judengasse, and that people were standing about helpless and confused without a leader; he immediately jumped from his carriage, and, full dressed as he was, in silk stockings and pumps, organized on the spot a fire-brigade, which averted a dangerous conflagration. On another occasion, voyaging in the Mediterranean, he quelled a mutiny on board an Italian ship, when captain and mates were powerless, and the vessel drifting on the rocks, by commanding sailors and passengers to

fall on their knees and pray to the Virgin, — adopting the idiom of their religion as well as their speech, of which he was a master.

As a student, first at Leipsic, then at Strasburg, including the years from 1766 to 1771, he seems not to have been a very diligent attendant on the lectures in either university, and to have profited little by professional instruction. In compliance with the wishes of his father, who intended him for a jurist, he gave some time to the study of the law; but on the whole the principal gain of those years was derived from intercourse with distinguished intellectual men and women, whose acquaintance he cultivated, and the large opportunities of social life.

In Strasburg occurred the famous love-passage with Friederike Brion, which terminated so unhappily at the time, and so fortunately in the end, for both.

Goethe has been blamed for not marrying Friederike. His real blame consists in the heedlessness with which, in the beginning of their acquaintance, he surrendered himself to the charm of her presence, thereby engaging her affection without a thought of the consequences to either. Besides the disillusion, which showed him, when he came fairly to face the question, that he did not love her sufficiently to justify marriage, there were circumstances — material, economical — which made it practically impossible. Her suffering in the separation,



After the painting by Frank Kirchbach

THE YOUNG GOETHE AT FRANKFORT

great as it was, — so great indeed as to cause a dangerous attack of bodily disease, — could not outweigh the pangs which he endured in his penitent contemplation of the consequences of his folly.

The next five years were spent partly in Frankfort and partly in Wetzlar, partly in the forced exercise of his profession, but chiefly in literary labors and the use of the pencil, which for a time disputed with the pen the devotion of the poet-artist. They may be regarded as perhaps the most fruitful, certainly the most growing, years of his life. They gave birth to "Götz von Berlichingen" and the "Sorrows of Werther," to the first inception of "Faust," and to many of his sweetest lyrics. It was during this period that he made the acquaintance of Charlotte Buff, the heroine of the "Sorrows of Werther," from whom he finally tore himself away, leaving Wetzlar when he discovered that their growing interest in each other was endangering her relation with Kestner, her betrothed. In those years, also, he formed a matrimonial engagement with Elizabeth Schönemann (Lili), the rupture of which, I must think, was a real misfortune for the poet. It came about by no fault of his. Her family had from the first opposed themselves to the match on the ground of social disparity. For even in mercantile Frankfort rank was strongly marked; and the Goethes, though respectable people, were beneath the Schönemanns in

the social scale. Goethe's genius went for nothing with Madame Schönemann; she wanted for her daughter an aristocratic husband, not a literary one, — one who had wealth in possession, and not merely, as Goethe had, in prospect. How far Lili was influenced by her mother's and brother's representations it is impossible to say; however, she showed herself capricious, was sometimes cold, or seemed so to him, while favoring the advances of others. Goethe was convinced that she did not entertain for him that devoted love without which he felt that their union could not be a happy one. They separated; but on her death-bed she confessed to a friend that all she was, intellectually and morally, she owed to him.

In 1775 our poet was invited by the young Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Karl August, — whose acquaintance he had made at Frankfort and at Mentz, his junior by two or three years, — to establish himself in civil service at the Grand-Ducal Court. The father, who had other views for his son, and was not much inclined to trust in princes, objected; many wondered, some blamed. Goethe himself appears to have wavered with painful indecision, and at last to have followed a mysterious impulse rather than a clear conviction or deliberate choice. His Heidelberg friend and hostess sought still to detain him, when the last express from Weimar

drove up to the door. To her he replied in the words of his own Egmont: —

"Say no more! Goaded by invisible spirits, the sun-steeds of time run away with the light chariot of our destiny; there is nothing for it but to keep our courage, hold tight the reins, and guide the wheels now right, now left, avoiding a stone here, a fall there. Whither away? Who knows? Scarcely one remembers whence he came."

It does not appear that he ever repented this most decisive step of his life-journey, nor does there appear to have been any reason why he should. A position, an office of some kind, he needs must have. Even now, the life of a writer by profession, with no function but that of literary composition, is seldom a prosperous one; in Goethe's day, when literature was far less remunerative than it is in ours, it was seldom practicable. Unless he had chosen to be maintained by his father, some employment besides that of book-making was an imperative necessity. The alternative of that which was offered — the one his father would have chosen — was that of a plodding jurist in a country where forensic pleading was unknown, and where the lawyer's profession offered no scope for any of the higher talents with which Goethe was endowed. On the whole, it was a happy chance that called him to the little capital of the little Grand-Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. If the State was one of petty dimensions

(a kind of pocket-kingdom, like so many of the principalities of Germany), it nevertheless included some of the fairest localities, and one at least of the most memorable in Europe, — the Wartburg, where Luther translated the Bible, where Saint Elizabeth dispensed the blessings of her life, where the Minnesingers are said to have held their poetic tournament, —

> "Heinrich von Ofterdingen,
> Wolfram von Eschenbach."

It included also the University of Jena, which at that time numbered some of the foremost men of Germany among its professors. It was a miniature State and a miniature town; one wonders that Goethe, who would have shone the foremost star in Berlin or Vienna, could content himself with so narrow a field. But Vienna and Berlin did not call him until it was too late, — until patronage was needless; and Weimar did. A miniature State, — but so much the greater his power and freedom and the opportunity of beneficent action.

No prince was ever more concerned to promote in every way the welfare of his subjects than Karl August; and in all his works undertaken for this purpose, Goethe was his foremost counsellor and aid. The most important were either suggested by him or executed under his direction. Had he never written a poem, or given to the world a single literary composition, he would still have led, as a Weimar official, a useful and benefi-

cent life. But the knowledge of the world and of business, the social and other experience gained in this way, was precisely the training which he needed, — and which every poet needs, — for the broadening and deepening and perfection of his art. Friedrich von Müller, in his valuable treatise of "Goethe as a Man of Affairs," tells us how he traversed every portion of the country to learn what advantage might be taken of topographical peculiarities, what provision made for local necessities. "Everywhere — on hilltops crowned with primeval forests, in the depths of gorges and shafts — Nature met her favorite with friendly advances, and revealed to him many a desired secret." Whatever was privately gained in this way was applied to public uses. He endeavored to infuse new life into the mining business, and to make himself familiar with all its technical requirements. For that end he revived his chemical experiments. New roads were built, hydraulic operations were conducted on more scientific principles, fertile meadows were won from the river Saale by systematic drainage, and in many a struggle with Nature an intelligently persistent will obtained the victory.

Nor was it with material obstacles only that the poet-minister had to contend. In the exercise of the powers intrusted to him he often encountered the fierce opposition of party interest and stubborn prejudice, and was sometimes driven to heroic and despotic meas-

ures in order to accomplish a desired result, — as when he foiled the machinations of the Jena professors in his determination to save the University library, and when, in spite of the opposition of the leading burghers, he demolished the city wall.

In 1786 Goethe was enabled to realize his cherished dream of a journey to Italy. There he spent a year and a half in the diligent study and admiring enjoyment of the treasures of art which made that country then, even more than now, the mark and desire of the civilized world. He came back an altered man. Intellectually and morally he had made in that brief space, under new influences, a prodigious stride. His sudden advance while they had remained stationary separated him from his contemporaries. The old associations of the Weimar world, which still revolved its little round, the much-enlightened traveller had outgrown. People thought him cold and reserved. It was only that the gay, impulsive youth had ripened into an earnest, sedate man. He found Germany jubilant over Schiller's "Robbers" and other writings representative of the "storm-and-stress" school, which his maturity had left far behind, his own contributions to which he had come to hate. Schiller, who first made his acquaintance at this time, writes to Körner: —

"I doubt that we shall ever become intimate. Much that to me is still of great interest he has already outlived.

He is so far beyond me, not so much in years as in experience and culture, that we can never come together in one course."

How greatly Schiller erred in the supposition that they never could become intimate, how close the intimacy which grew up between them, what harmony of sentiment, how friendly and mutually helpful their co-operation, is sufficiently notorious.

But such was the first aspect which Goethe presented to strangers at this period of his life; he rather repelled than attracted, until nearer acquaintance learned rightly to interpret the man, and intellectual or moral affinity bridged the chasm which seemed to divide him from his kind. In part, too, the distance and reserve of which people complained was a necessary measure of self-defence against the disturbing importunities of social life. "From Rome," says Friedrich von Müller, "from the midst of the richest and grandest life, dates the stern maxim of 'Renunciation' which governed his subsequent being and doing, and which furnished his only guarantee of mental equipoise and peace."

His literary works hitherto had been spasmodic and lawless effusions, the escapes of a gushing, turbulent youth. In Rome he had learned the sacred significance of art. The consciousness of his true vocation had been awakened in him; and to that, on the eve of his for-

tieth year, he thenceforth solemnly devoted the remainder of his life. He obtained release from the more onerous of his official engagements, retaining only such functions as accorded with his proper calling as a man of letters and of science. He renounced his daily intercourse with Frau von Stein, though still retaining and manifesting his unabated friendship for the woman to whom in former years he had devoted so large a portion of his time, and employed himself in giving forth those immortal words which have settled forever his place among the stars of first magnitude in the intellectual world.

Noticeable and often noted was the charm and (when arrived to maturity) the grand effect of his personal presence. Physical beauty is not the stated accompaniment, nor even the presumable adjunct, of intellectual greatness. In Goethe, as perhaps in no other, the two were combined. A wondrous presence! — on this point the voices are one and the witnesses many. "Goethe was with us," so writes Heinse to one of his friends; "a beautiful youth of twenty-five, full of genius and force from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; a heart full of feeling, a spirit full of fire, who with eagle wings *ruit immensus ore profundo*." Jacobi writes: "The more I think of it, the more impossible it seems to me to communicate to any one who has not seen Goethe any conception of this extraordinary crea-

ture of God." Lavater says: "Unspeakably sweet, an indescribable appearance, the most terrible and lovable of men." Hufeland, the chief medical celebrity of Germany, describes his appearance in early manhood: "Never shall I forget the impression which he made as 'Orestes' in Greek costume. You thought you beheld an Apollo. Never was seen in any man such union of physical and spiritual perfection and beauty as at that time in Goethe." More remarkable still is the testimony of Wieland, who had reason to be offended, having been before their acquaintance the subject of Goethe's sharp satire. But immediately at their first meeting, sitting at table "by the side," he says, "of this glorious youth, I was radically cured of all my vexation. . . . Since this morning," he wrote to Jacobi, "my soul is as full of Goethe as a dewdrop is of the morning sun." And to Zimmermann: "He is in every respect the greatest, best, most splendid human being that ever God created." Goethe was then twenty-six. Henry Crabbe Robinson, who saw him at the age of fifty-two, reports him one of the most "oppressively handsome" men he had ever seen, and speaks particularly as all who have described him speak, of his wonderfully brilliant eyes. Those eyes, we are told, had lost nothing of their lustre, nor his head its natural covering, at the age of eighty.

Among the heroic qualities notable in Goethe, I

reckon his faithful and unflagging industry. Here was a man who took pains with himself, — *liess sich's sauer werden*, — and made the most of himself. He speaks of wasting, while a student in Leipsic, "the beautiful time;" and certainly neither at Leipsic nor afterward at Strasburg did he toil as his Wagner in "Faust" would have done. But he was always learning. In the lecture-room or out of it, with pen and books or gay companions, he was taking in, to give forth again in dramatic or philosophic form the world of his experience.

A frolicsome youth may leave something to regret in the way of time misspent; but Goethe the man was no dawdler, no easy-going Epicurean. On the whole, he made the most of himself, and stands before the world a notable instance of a complete life. He would do the work which was given him to do. He would not die till the second part of "Faust" was brought to its predetermined close. By sheer force of will he lived till that work was done. Smitten at fourscore by the death of his son, and by deaths all around, he kept to his task. "The idea of duty alone sustains me; the spirit is willing, the flesh must." When "Faust" was finished, the strain relaxed. "My remaining days," he said, "I may consider a free gift; it matters little what I do now, or whether I do anything." And six months later he died.

A complete life! A life of strenuous toil! At home and abroad, — in Italy and Sicily, at Ilmenau and Carlsbad, as in his study at Weimar, — with eye or pen or speech, he was always at work. A man of rigid habits; no lolling or lounging. "He showed me," says Eckermann, "an elegant easy-chair which he had bought to-day at auction. 'But,' said he, 'I shall never or rarely use it; all indolent habits are against my nature. You see in my chamber no sofa; I sit always in my old wooden chair, and never, till a few weeks ago, have permitted even a leaning place for my head to be added. If surrounded by tasteful furniture, my thoughts are arrested; I am placed in an agreeable but passive state. Unless we are accustomed to them from early youth, splendid chambers and elegant furniture had better be left to people without thoughts.'" This in his eighty-second year!

A widely diffused prejudice regarding the personal character of Goethe refuses to credit him with any moral worth accordant with his bodily and mental gifts. It figures him a libertine, — heartless, loveless, bad. I do not envy the mental condition of those who can rest in the belief that a really great poet can be a bad man. Be assured that the fruits of genius have never grown, and will never grow, in such a soil. Of all great poets Byron might seem at first glance to constitute an exception to this — I venture to call it —

law of Nature. Yet hear what Walter Scott, a sufficient judge, said of Byron: —

"The errors of Lord Byron arose neither from depravity of heart — for nature had not committed the anomaly of uniting to such extraordinary talents an imperfect moral sense — nor from feelings dead to the admiration of virtue. No man had ever a kinder heart for sympathy, or a more open hand for the relief of distress; and no mind was ever more formed for enthusiastic admiration of noble actions."

The case of Goethe requires no appeal to general principles. It only requires that the charges against him be fairly investigated; that he be tried by documentary evidence, and by the testimony of competent witnesses. The mistake is made of confusing breaches of conventional decorum with essential depravity.

That Goethe was faulty in many ways may be freely conceded. But surely there is a wide difference between not being faultless and being definitely bad. To call a man bad is to say that the evil in him preponderates over the good. In the case of Goethe the balance was greatly the other way. It has been said that he abused the confidence reposed in him by women; that he encouraged affection which he did not reciprocate for artistic purposes. The charge is utterly groundless; and in the case of Bettine has been refuted by irrefragable proof. To say that he was wanting in love, heartless, cold, is ridiculously false. Yet the charge is

constantly reiterated in the face of facts, — reiterated with undoubting assurance and a certain complacency which seems to say, "Thank God! we are not as this man was." There is a satisfaction which some people feel in *spotting* their man, — Burns drank; Coleridge took opium; Byron was a rake; Goethe was cold: by these marks we know them. The poet found it necessary, as I have said, in later years, under social pressure, for the sake of the work which was given him to do, to fortify himself with a mail of reserve. And this, indeed, contrasted strangely with his former *abandon*, and with the customary gush of German sentimentality. It was common then for Germans who had known each other by report, and were mutually attracted, when first they met, to fall on each other's necks and kiss and weep. Goethe, as a young man, had indulged such fervors; but in old age he had lost this effusiveness, or saw fit to restrain himself outwardly, while his kindly nature still glowed with its pristine fires. He wrote to Frau von Stein, "I may truly say that my innermost condition does not correspond to my outward behavior." Hence the charge of coldness. Say that Mount Ætna is cold: do we not see the snow on its sides?

But he was unpatriotic; he occupied himself with poetry, and did not cry out while his country was in the death-throes — so it seemed — of the struggle with France! But what should he have done? What *could*

he have done? What would his single arm or declamation have availed? No man more than Goethe longed for the rehabilitation of Germany. In his own way he wrought for that end; he could work effectually in no other. That enigmatical composition, — the "Märchen," — according to the latest interpretation, indicates how, in Goethe's view, that end was to be accomplished. To one who considers the relation of ideas to events, it will not seem extravagant when I say that to Goethe, more than to any one individual, Germany is indebted for her emancipation, independence, and present political regeneration.[1]

[1] [The following interpretation of the "Märchen" is condensed from a later portion of this essay, and used here as a foot-note for the light it throws upon Goethe's political career.]

In the summer of 1795 Goethe composed for Schiller's new magazine, "Die Horen," a prose poem known in German literature as *Das Märchen*, — "*The* Tale;" as if it were the only one, or the one which more than another deserves that appellation. . . .

Goethe gave this essay to the public as a riddle which would probably be unintelligible at the time, but which might perhaps find an interpreter after many days, when the hints contained in it should be verified. Since its first appearance commentators have exercised their ingenuity upon it, perceiving it to be allegorical, but until recently without success. . . . I follow Dr. Herman's Baumgart's lead in the exposition which I now offer.

"The Tale" is a prophetic vision of the destinies of Germany, — an allegorical foreshowing at the close of the eighteenth century of what Germany was yet to become, and has in great part already become. A position is predicted for her like that which she occupied from the time of Charles the Great to the time of Charles V., — a period during which the Holy Roman Empire of Germany was the leading secular power in Western Europe. That time had gone by. Since the middle of the sixteenth century Germany had declined, and at the date of

It is true, his writings contain no declamations against tyrants, and no tirades in favor of liberty. He believed that oppression existed only through ignorance and blindness, and these he was all his life long seeking to remove. He believed that true liberty is attainable only through mental illumination, and that he was all his life long seeking to promote.

He was no agitator, no revolutionist; he had no faith in violent measures. Human welfare, he judged, is not to be advanced in that way; is less dependent on forms of polity than on the life within. But if the test of patriotism is the service rendered to one's country, who more patriotic than he? Lucky for us and the world that he persisted to serve her in his own way, and not as the agitators claimed that he should. It was clear to him then, and must be clear to us now, that he

this writing (1795) had nearly reached her darkest day. Disintegrated, torn by conflicting interests, pecked by petty rival princes, despairing of her own future, it seemed impossible that she should ever again become a power among the nations. Goethe felt this; he felt it as profoundly as any German of his day . . . and he characteristically went into himself and studied the situation. The result was this wonderful composition, — "Das Märchen." He perceived that Germany must die to be born again. She did die, and is born again. He had the sagacity to foresee the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, — an event which took place eleven years later, in 1806. The Empire is figured by the composite statue of the fourth King in the subterranean Temple, which crumbles to pieces when that Temple, representing Germany's past, emerges and stands above ground by the River. The resurrection of the Temple and its stand by the River is the *dénouement* of the Tale. And that signifies, allegorically, the rehabilitation of Germany.

could not have been what they demanded, and at the same time have given to his country and the world what he did.

As a courtier and favorite of Fortune, it was inevitable that Goethe should have enemies. They have done what they could to blacken his name; and to this day the shadow they have cast upon it in part remains. But of this be sure, that no selfish, loveless egoist could have had and retained such friends. The man whom the saintly Fräulein von Klettenberg chose for her friend, whom clear-sighted, stern-judging Herder declared that he loved as he did his own soul; the man whose thoughtful kindness is celebrated by Herder's incomparable wife, whom Karl August and the Duchess Luise cherished as a brother; the man whom children everywhere welcomed as their ready playfellow and sure ally, of whom pious Jung Stilling lamented that admirers of Goethe's genius knew so little of the goodness of his heart, — can this have been a bad man, heartless, cold?

II. THE WRITER.

I HAVE said that to Goethe, above all writers, belongs the distinction of having excelled, not experimented merely, — that, others have also done, — but excelled in many distinct kinds. To the lyrist he added the dramatist, to the dramatist the novelist, to the novelist the mystic seer, and to all these the naturalist and scientific

discoverer. The history of literature exhibits no other instance in which a great poet has supplemented his proper orbit with so wide an epicyle.

In poetry, as in science, the ground of his activity was a passionate love of Nature, which dates from his boyhood. At the age of fifteen, recovering from a sickness caused by disappointment in a boyish affair of the heart, he betook himself with his sketch-book to the woods. "In the farthest depth of the forest," he says, "I sought out a solemn spot, where ancient oaks and beeches formed a shady retreat. A slight declivity of the soil made the merit of the ancient boles more conspicuous. This space was inclosed by a thicket of bushes, between which peeped moss-covered rocks, mighty and venerable, affording a rapid fall to an affluent brook."

The sketches made of these objects at that early age could have had no artistic value, although the methodical father was careful to mount and preserve them. But what the pencil, had it been the pencil of the greatest master, could never glean from scenes like these, what art could never grasp, what words can never formulate, the heart of the boy then imbibed, assimilated, resolved in his innermost being. There awoke in him then those mysterious feelings, those unutterable yearnings, that pensive joy in the contemplation of Nature, which leavened all his subsequent

life, and the influence of which is so perceptible in his poetry, especially in his lyrics. . . .

The first literary venture by which Goethe became widely known was "Götz von Berlichingen," a dramatic picture of the sixteenth century, in which the principal figure is a predatory noble of that name. A dramatic picture, but not in any true sense a play, it owed its popularity at the time partly to the truth of its portraitures, partly to its choice of a native subject and the truly German feeling which pervades it. It was a new departure in German literature, and perplexed the critics as much as it delighted the general public. It anticipated by a quarter of a century what is technically called the Romantic School.

"Götz von Berlichingen" was soon followed by the "Sorrows of Werther," — one of those books which on their first appearance have taken the world by storm, and of which Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is the latest example. It is a curious circumstance that a great poet should have won his first laurels by prose composition. Sir Walter Scott eclipsed the splendor of his poems by the popularity of the Waverley novels. Goethe eclipsed the world-wide popularity of his "Werther" by the splendor of his poems.

Of one who was great in so many kinds, it may seem difficult to decide in what department he most excelled.

Without undertaking to measure and compare what is incommensurable, I hold that Goethe's genius is essentially lyrical. Whatever else may be claimed for him, he is, first of all, and chiefly, a singer. Deepest in his nature, the most innate of all his faculties, was the faculty of song, of rhythmical utterance. The first to manifest itself in childhood, it was still active at the age of fourscore. The lyrical portions of the second part of "Faust," some of which were written a short time before his death, are as spirited, the versification as easy, the rhythm as perfect, as the songs of his youth.

As a lyrist he is unsurpassed, I venture to say unequalled, if we take into view the whole wide range of his performance in this kind, — from the ballads, the best-known of his smaller poems, and those light fugitive pieces, those bursts of song which came to him without effort, and with such a rush that in order to arrest and preserve them he seized, as he tells us, the first scrap of paper that came to hand and wrote upon it diagonally, if it happened so to lie on his table, lest, through the delay of selecting and placing, the inspiration should be checked and the poem evaporate, — from these to such stately compositions as the "Zueignung," or dedication of his poems, the "Weltseele" and the "Orphic Sayings," — in short, from poetry that writes itself, that springs spontaneously in the mind, to poetry

that is written with elaborate art. There is this distinction, and it is one of the most marked in lyric verse. Compare in English poetry, by way of illustration, the snatches of song in Shakspeare's plays with Shakspeare's sonnets; compare Burns with Gray; compare Jean Ingelow with Browning.

Goethe's ballads have an undying popularity; they have been translated, and most of them are familiar to English readers. . . .

In the Elegies written after his return from Italy, the author figures as a classic poet inspired by the Latin Muse. The choicest of these elegies — the "Alexis and Dora" — is not so much an imitation of the ancients as it is the manifestation of a side of the poet's nature which he had in common with the ancients. He wrote as a Greek or Roman might write, because he felt his subject as a Greek or Roman might feel it.

"Hermann und Dorothea," which Schiller pronounced the acme not only of Goethean but of all modern art, was written professedly as an attempt in the Homeric[1] style, motived by Wolf's "Prolegomena" and Voss's "Luise." It is Homeric only in its circumstantiality, in the repetition of the same epithets applied to the same persons, and in the Greek realism of Goethe's nature. The theme is very un-Homeric; it is thoroughly modern and German, —

[1] "Doch Homeride zu sein, auch noch als letzter, ist schön."

"Germans themselves I present, to the humbler dwelling I lead you,
Where with Nature as guide man is natural still." [1]

This exquisite poem has been translated into English hexameters with great fidelity by Miss Ellen Frothingham.

"Iphigenie auf Tauris" handles a Greek theme, exhibits Greek characters, and was hailed on its first appearance as a genuine echo of the Greek drama. Mr. Lewes denies it that character; and certainly it is not Greek, but Christian, in sentiment. It differs from the extant drama of Euripides, who treats the same subject, in the Christian feeling which determines its *dénouement*. . . .

A large portion of Goethe's productions have taken the dramatic form; yet he cannot be said, theatrically speaking, to have been, like Schiller, a successful dramatist. His plays, with the exception of "Egmont" and the First Part of "Faust," have not commanded the stage; they form no part, I believe, of the stock of any German theatre. The characterizations are striking, but the positions are not dramatic. Single scenes in some of them are exceptions, — like that in "Egmont," where Clara endeavors to rouse her fellow-citizens to the rescue of the Count, while Brackenburg seeks to restrain her, and several of the scenes in the First Part of

[1] From the Elegy entitled "Hermann und Dorothea."

"Faust." But, on the whole, the interest of Goethe's dramas is psychological rather than scenic. Especially is this the case with "Tasso," one of the author's noblest works, where the characters are not so much actors as metaphysical portraitures. Schiller, in his plays, had always the stage in view. Goethe, on the contrary, wrote for readers, or cultivated, reflective hearers, not spectators. . . . .

When I say, then, that Goethe, compared with Schiller, failed of dramatic success, I mean that his talent did not lie in the line of plays adapted to the stage as it is; or if the talent was not wanting, his taste did not incline to such performance. He was no playwright.

But there is another and higher sense of the word *dramatic*, where Goethe is supreme, — the sense in which Dante's great poem is called *Commedia*, a play. There is a drama whose scope is beyond the compass of any earthly stage, — a drama not for theatre-goers, to be seen on the boards, but for intellectual contemplation of men and angels. Such a drama is "Faust," of which I shall speak hereafter.

Of Goethe's prose works, — I mean works of prose fiction, — the most considerable are two philosophical novels, "Wilhelm Meister" and the "Elective Affinities."

In the first of these the various and complex motives which have shaped the composition may be comprehended in the one word *education*, — the education

of life for the business of life. The main thread of the narrative traces through a labyrinth of loosely connected scenes and events the growth of the hero's character, — a progressive training by various influences, passional, intellectual, social, moral, and religious. These are represented by the *personnel* of the story. In accordance with this design, the hero himself, if so he may be called, has no pronounced traïts, is more negative than positive, but is brought into contact with many very positive characters. His life is the stage on which these characters perform. A ground is thus provided for the numerous portraits of which the author's large experience furnished the originals, and for lessons of practical wisdom derived from his close observation of men and things and his lifelong reflection thereon.

"Wilhelm Meister," if not the most artistic, is the most instructive, and in that view, next to "Faust," the most important, of Goethe's works. In it he has embodied his philosophy of life, — a philosophy far enough removed from the epicurean views which ignorance has ascribed to him, — a philosophy which is best described by the term *ascetic*. Its keynote is Renunciation. "With renunciation begins the true life," was the author's favorite maxim; and the second part of "Wilhelm Meister" — the *Wanderjahre* — bears the collateral title *Die Entsagenden;* that is, the "Renouncing" or the "Self-denying." The characters that figure in

this second part — most of whom have had their training in the first — form a society whose principle of union is self-renunciation and a life of beneficent activity. . . .

The most fascinating character in "Wilhelm Meister" — the wonder and delight of the reader — is Mignon, the child-woman, — a pure creation of Goethe's genius, without a prototype in literature. Readers of Scott will remember Fenella, the elfish maiden in "Peveril of the Peak." Scott says in his Preface to that novel: "The character of Fenella, which from its peculiarity made a favorable impression on the public, was far from being original. The fine sketch of Mignon in Wilhelm Meister's *Lehrjahre* — a celebrated work from the pen of Goethe — gave the idea of such a being. But the copy will be found to be greatly different from my great prototype; nor can I be accused of borrowing anything save the general idea."

As I remember Fenella, the resemblance to Mignon is merely superficial. A certain weirdness is all they have in common. The intensity of the inner life, the unspeakable longing, the cry of the unsatisfied heart, the devout aspiration, the presentiment of the heavenly life which characterize Mignon are peculiar to her; they constitute her individuality. Wilhelm has found her a kidnapped child attached to a strolling circus company, and has rescued her from the cruel hands of the manager.

Thenceforth she clings to him with a passionate devotion, in which gratitude for her deliverance, filial affection, and the love of a maiden for her hero are strangely blended. Afflicted with a disease of the heart, she is subject to terrible convulsions, which increase the tenderness of her protector for the doomed child. After one of these attacks, in which she had been suffering frightful pain, we read: —

"He held her fast. She wept; and no tongue can express the force of those tears. Her long hair had become unfastened and hung loose over her shoulders. Her whole being seemed to be melting away. . . . At last she raised herself up. A mild cheerfulness gleamed from her face. 'My father!' she cried, 'you will not leave me! You will be my father! I will be your child.' Softly, before the door, a harp began to sound. The old Harper was bringing his heartiest songs as an evening sacrifice to his friend."

Then bursts on the reader that world-famed song, in which the soul of Mignon, with its unconquerable yearnings, is forever embalmed, — "Kennst du das Land": —

"Know'st thou the land that bears the citron's bloom?
The golden orange glows 'mid verdant gloom,
A gentle wind from heaven's deep azure blows,
The myrtle low, and high the laurel grows, —
Know'st thou the land? [1]
Oh, there! oh, there!
Would I with thee, my best beloved, repair." . . .

[1] Literally, "Know'st thou it well?" But the word "well," in this case, does not answer to the German *wohl*.

The "Elective Affinities" has been strangely misinterpreted as having an immoral tendency, as encouraging conjugal infidelity, and approving "free love." That any one who has read the work with attention to the end could so misjudge it seems incredible. Precisely the reverse of this, its aim is to enforce the sanctity of the nuptial bond by showing the tragic consequences resulting from its violation, though only in thought and feeling. . . .

Here, a word concerning one merit of Goethe which seems to me not to have been sufficiently appreciated by even his admirers, — his loving skill in the delineation of female character; the commanding place he assigns to woman in his writings; his full recognition of the importance of feminine influence in human destiny. The prophetic utterance, which forms the conclusion of "Faust," — "The ever womanly draws us on," — is the summing up of Goethe's own experience of life. Few men had ever such wide opportunities of acquaintance with women. If, on the one hand, his loves had revealed to him the passional side of feminine nature, he had enjoyed, on the other, the friendship of some of the purest and noblest of womankind. Conspicuous among these are Fräulein von Klettenberg and the Duchess Luise, whom no one, says Lewes, ever speaks of but in terms of veneration. No poet but Shakspeare, and scarcely Shakspeare, has set before the world so

rich a gallery of female portraits. They range from the lowest to the highest, — from the wanton to the saint; they are drawn in firm lines, and limned in imperishable colors, . . . each bearing the stamp of her own individuality, and each confessing a master's hand. These may be considered as representing different phases of the poet's experience, — different *stadia* in his view of life. "The ever womanly draws us on." So Goethe, of all men most susceptible of feminine influence, was led by it from weakness to strength, from dissipation to concentration, from doubt to clearness, from tumult to repose, from the earthly to the heavenly.

"FAUST."

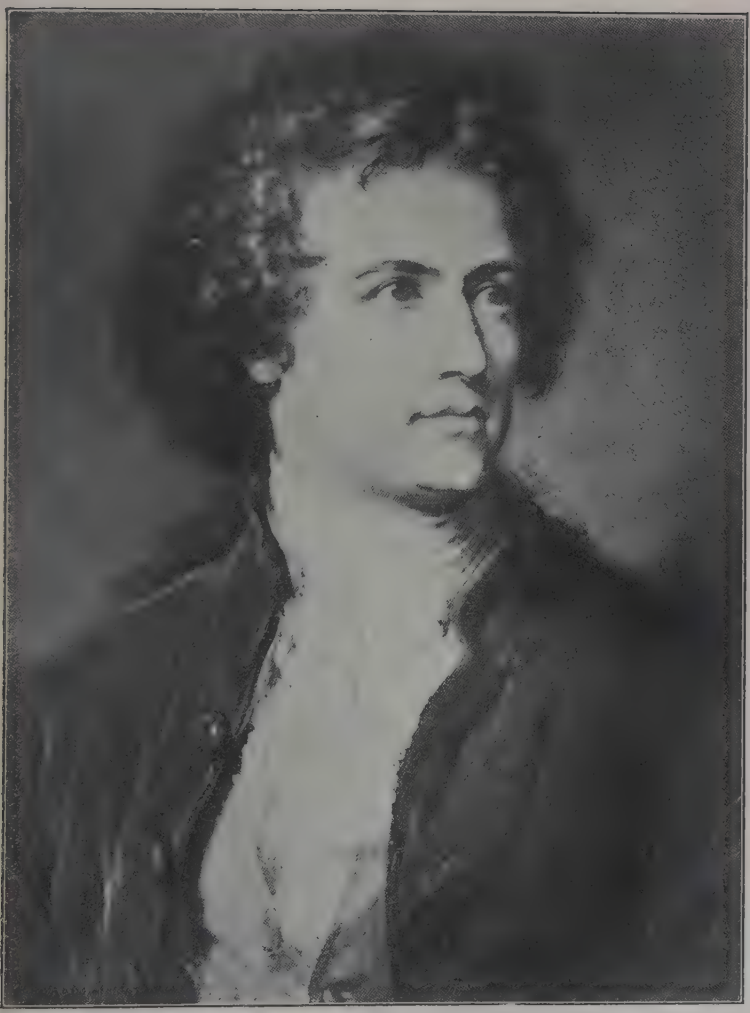
Goethe appears to have derived his knowledge of the Faust legend partly from the work of Widmann, published in 1599,[1] partly from another more modern in its form, which appeared in 1728, and partly from the puppet plays exhibited in Frankfort and other cities of Germany, of which that legend was then a favorite theme. He was not the only writer of that day who made use of it. Some thirty of his contemporaries had produced their "Fausts" during the interval which elapsed between the inception and publication of his great work. Oblivion overtook them all, with the ex-

[1] The earlier work of Spiess (1588) was translated into English and furnished Marlowe with the subject-matter of his "Dr. Faustus."

ception of Lessing's, of which a few fragments are left; the manuscript of the complete work was unaccountably lost on its way to the publisher, between Dresden and Leipsic.

The composition of "Faust," as we learn from Goethe's biography, proceeded spasmodically, with many and long interruptions between the inception and conclusion. Projected in 1769 at the age of twenty, it was not completed till the year 1831, at the age of eighty-two. . . .

But the effect of the long arrest, which after Goethe's removal to Weimar delayed the completion of the "Faust," is most apparent in the wide gulf which separates, as to character and style, the Second Part from the First. So great, indeed, is the distance between the two that, without external historical proofs of identity, it would seem from internal evidence altogether improbable, in spite of the slender thread of the fable which connects them, that both poems were the work of one and the same author. And really the author was not the same. The change which had come over Goethe on his return from Italy had gone down to the very springs of his intellectual life. The fervor and the rush, the sparkle and foam of his early productions, had been replaced by the stately calm and the luminous breadth of view that is born of experience. The torrent of the mountains had become the river



From the painting by C. Jaeger

GOETHE

of the plain; romantic impetuosity had changed to classic repose. He could still, by occasional efforts of the will, cast himself back into the old moods, resume the old thread, and so complete the first "Faust." But we may confidently assert that he could not, after the age of forty, have originated the poem, any more than before his Italian tour he could have written the second "Faust," purporting to be a continuation of the first. The difference in spirit and style is enormous.

As to the question which of the two is the greater production, it is like asking which is the greater, Dante's "Commedia" or Shakspeare's "Macbeth"? They are incommensurable. As to which is the more generally interesting, no question can arise. There are thousands who enjoy and admire the First Part to one who even reads the Second. The interest of the former is poetic and thoroughly human; the interest of the other is partly poetic, but mostly philosophic and scientific. . . .

The symbolical character of "Faust" is assumed by all the critics, and in part confessed by the author himself. Besides the general symbolism pervading and motiving the whole, — a symbolism of human destiny, — and here and there a shadowing forth of the poet's private experience, there are special allusions — local, personal, enigmatic conceits — which have furnished

topics of learned discussion and taxed the ingenuity of numerous commentators. We need not trouble ourselves with these subtleties. But little exegesis is needed for a right comprehension of the true and substantial import of the work.

The key to the plot is given in the Prologue in Heaven. The devil, in the character of Mephistopheles, asks permission to tempt Faust; he boasts his ability to get entire possession of his soul and drag him down to hell. The Lord grants the permission, and prophesies the failure of the attempt: —

"Be it allowed! Draw this spirit from its Source if you can lay hold of him; bear him with you on your downward path, and stand ashamed when you are forced to confess that a good man in his dark strivings has a consciousness of the right way."

Here we have a hint of the author's design. He does not intend that the devil shall succeed; he does not mean to adopt the conclusion of the legend and send Faust to hell. He had the penetration to see, and he meant to show, that the notion implied in the old popular superstition of selling one's soul to the devil — the notion that evil can obtain the entire and final possession of the soul — is a fallacy; that the soul is not man's to dispose of, and cannot be so traded away. We are the soul's, not the soul ours. Evil is self-limited; the good in man must finally prevail. So long as he

strives he is not lost; Heaven will come to the aid of his better nature. This is the doctrine, the philosophy, of "Faust." In the First Part, stung by disappointment in his search of knowledge, by failure to lay hold of the superhuman, and urged on by his baser propensities personified in Mephistopheles, Faust abandons himself to sensual pleasure, — seduces innocence, burdens his soul with heavy guilt, and seems to be entirely given over to evil. This Part ends with Mephistopheles' imperious call, — "Her zu mir," — as if secure of his victim. Before the appearance of the Second Part, the reader was at liberty to accept that conclusion. But in the Second Part Faust gradually wakes from the intoxication of passion, outgrows the dominion of appetite, plans great and useful works, whereby Mephistopheles loses more and more his hold of him; and after his death is baffled in his attempt to appropriate Faust's immortal part, to which the heavenly Powers assert their right. . . .

The character of Margaret is unique; its duplicate is not to be found in all the picture galleries of fiction. Shakspeare, in the wide range of his feminine *personnel*, has no portrait like this. A girl of low birth and vulgar circumstance, imbued with the ideas and habits of her class, speaking the language of that class from which she never for a moment deviates into finer phrase, takes on, through the magic handling of the

poet, an ideal beauty. Externally common and prosaic in all her ways, she is yet thoroughly poetic, transfigured in our conception by her perfect love. To that love, unreasoning, unsuspecting, — to the excess of that which in itself is no fault, but beautiful and good, — her fall and ruin are due. Her story is the tragedy of her sex in all time. As Schlegel said of the "Prometheus Bound," — "It is not a single tragedy, but tragedy itself." . . .

[The First Part ends with the prison scene, where poor Margaret, escaping by death, ascends to heaven, while Mephistopheles, shouting an imperious "Hither to me!" disappears with Faust.] The reader is allowed to suppose — and most readers did suppose — that the author meant it should be inferred that the devil had secured his victim, and that Faust, according to the legend, had paid the forfeit of his soul to the powers of hell.

But Faust reappears in a new poem, — the Second Part. He is there introduced sleeping, as if burying in torpor the lusts and crimes and sorrows of his past career. Pitying spirits are about him, to heal his woes and promote his return to a better life. . . .

[At the end of his hundred years of earthly life,] Mephistopheles . . . fails to secure the immortal part of Faust, which the angels appropriate and bear aloft:

> "This member of the upper spheres
> We rescue from the devil;

For whoso strives and perseveres
May be redeemed from evil."

The last two lines may be supposed to contain the author's justification of Mephistopheles' defeat and Faust's salvation. Though a man surrender himself to evil, if there is that in him which evil cannot satisfy, an impulse by which he outgrows the gratifications of vice, extends his horizon and lifts his desires, pursues an onward course until he learns to place his aims outside of himself, and to seek satisfaction in works of public utility, — he is beyond the power of Satan: he may be redeemed from evil.

One could wish, indeed, that more decisive marks of moral development had been exhibited in the latter stages of Faust's career. But here comes in the Christian doctrine of Grace, which Goethe applies to the problem of man's destiny. Faust is represented as saved by no merit of his own, but by the interest which Heaven has in every soul in which there is the possibility of a heavenly life.

And so the new-born ascending spirit is committed by the Mater gloriosa to the tutelage of Gretchen [Margaret], — *una pœnitentium*, — now purified from all the stains of her earthly life, to whom is given the injunction: —

"Lift thyself up to higher spheres!
When he divines, he 'll follow thee."

And the Mystic Choir chants the epilogue which embodies the moral of the play: —

"All that is perishing
Types the ideal;
Dream of our cherishing
Thus becomes real.
Superhumanly
Here it is done;
The ever womanly
Draweth us on."

ALFRED (LORD) TENNYSON.

1809–1892.

THE SPIRIT OF MODERN POETRY.

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ALFRED (LORD) TENNYSON.

THE SPIRIT OF MODERN POETRY.

By G. MERCER ADAM.

OF Tennyson what can one write freshly to-day that will not seem but an echo of what has been said or written of England's noble singer who, on the death of Wordsworth, now over half a century ago, assumed the official bays of the English laureateship? Personal homage, of course, one can pay to the illustrious name, so dear to the heart of the English-speaking race; but how freshly or vitally can any writer now speak of that magnificent body of his verse which is the glory of his age, of the nobility and knightly virtues of its author's character, of the splendor of his genius, or of the breadth of intellectual and spiritual interests which was so signally manifested in all that Tennyson thought and wrote? Among the "Beacon Lights" in the present series of volumes the Laureate of the age has not hitherto been included, and to fill the gap the writer of this sketch has ventured, not, of course, to say all that might be said of the great

poet, but modestly to deal with the man and his art, so that neither his era nor his work shall go unchronicled or fail of some recognition, however inadequate, in these pages.

Tennyson's supreme excellence, it is admitted, lies not so much in his themes as in his transcendent art. It is this that has given him his hold upon a cultured age and won for him immortality. His work is the perfection of literary form, and, in his lyrical pieces especially, his melody is exquisite. Not less masterly is his power of construction, while his sensibility to beauty is phenomenal. His secluded life brought him close to nature's heart and made him familiar with her every voice and mood. In interpreting these, much of the charm lies in the fidelity of his descriptions and in the surpassing beauty of the word-painting. In the Shakespearian sense he lacked the dramatic faculty, and he had but slender gifts of invention and creation. But broad, if not always strong, was his intelligence, and keen his interest in the problems of the time. Though living apart from the world, he was yet of it; and in many of his poems may be traced not only the doings, but the thought and tendencies, of his age. His Christianity, though undogmatic, was real and pervasive, and his love for nature was a devotion. In national affairs, as befitted the official singer of his

country (witness his fine 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington'), he showed himself the historic as well as the modern Englishman, and great was his reverence for law and freedom. Attractive also, if at times somewhat commonplace, is the quiet domestic sphere which Tennyson has hallowed in the many modern idylls which depict the joys and sorrows of humble life. No trait in the poet's many-sided character is more beautiful than the sympathy he has manifested in these poems with the world's toilers; while nothing could well be more touching than the pathos with which he invests their simple annals.

Typical of the Victorian age in which he lived, Tennyson is also representative of its highest thought and culture. This is seen not only in the thought of his verse, but in its splendid forms, and especially in the technical equipment of the poet. In his dialogues there is much movement and action, and he had consummate skill in the handling of metres. Few poets have approached him in the successful writing of blank verse, which has a delightful cadence as well as calm strength. Above all his gifts, he was an artist in words, his ear being most sensitively attuned and his taste pure and refined for the delicate artistry of the poet's work. In this respect he is a matchless literary workman. Besides the music of his verse, his thought is ever high, and in his serious moods consecrated to

noble and reverent purposes. In the midst of the negations and convulsive movements of his day his spirit is always serene, and his thought, while at times dreamily melancholy, is conserving and full of faith's highest assurance. His sympathy with his fellow-man was keen and wide-souled; and though he stood aloof from the conflict and struggle of his day, he was far from indifferent to its movements, and with high purpose strove if not to direct at least to reflect them. This was specially characteristic of the man, and in the conflict with doubt no poet has more keenly interpreted the mental struggles of the thoughtful soul and the deep underlying spirit of his time, or more beneficently given the age an assured ground of faith while conserving its highest and dearest hopes. Happily, too, unlike many poets, his own character was lofty and blameless, and hence his message comes with more consistency, as well as with a higher inspiration and power. Nor is the message the less impressive for the note of honest doubt which finds utterance in many a poem, or for the intimation of a creed that is at once liberal and conservative. With the evidences before the reader that the poet himself had had his own soul-wrestlings and periods of mental conflict, his counsellings of courage and faith are all the more effective, as they are in unison with his belief in the upward progress of the race, and his unshaken trust in a higher Power.

Lacking in intensity of passion and dramatic force, Tennyson here again is but typical of his era, to him one of reposeful content and calm, reasoning progress. Of permanent, lasting value much of his verse undoubtedly is, but not all of it will escape the indifference of posterity or the measuring-rod and censure, it may be, of the future critic. He had not the stirring strains or the careless rapture of other and earlier poets of the motherland, — his characteristic is more contemplative and brooding, — yet his range is unusually comprehensive and his power varied and sustained, as well as marked by the highest qualities of rhythmic beauty. In the idyll, where he specially shines, we have much that is lovely and limpid, with abounding instances of that felicitous word-painting for which he was noted. This is especially seen in the simple pastoral idylls, such as 'Dora,' 'The May Queen,' and 'The Miller's Daughter,' or in those tender lyrics such as 'Mariana,' 'Sir Galahad,' 'The Dying Swan,' and 'The Talking Oak.' In the ballads and songs, how felicitous again is the poet's work, and how rich yet mellifluous is the strain! Had Tennyson written nothing else but these, with the verse included in the volumes issued by him in 1832 and 1842, how high would he have been placed in the choir of song, and how supreme should we have deemed his art! In "The Princess" alone there are songs that would have made any poet's reputation,

while for music and color, and especially for perfection of poetic workmanship, they are almost matchless in their beauty.

Fortunately, however, the poet was to give us much even beyond these surpassingly beautiful things, and make a more unique and distinctive contribution to the verse of his era. In the years that followed the production of his early writings the poet matures in thought as his art ripens and reaches still higher qualities of craftsmanship. Recluse as he was, he moreover had his experiences of life and drank deeply of sorrow's cup, as we see in "In Memoriam," — that noble tribute to his youthful friend, Arthur Hallam, with its grand hymnal qualities and powerful and reverent lessons for an age shifting in its beliefs and unconfirmed in its faith. In later work from his pen we also see the Laureate — for he has now received official recognition from his nation — in his relations to the culture as well as to the thought of his time, keeping pace with the age in all its complex engrossments and problems. This is shown in much and varied work turned out with its author's loving interest in the poetic art, and with characteristic delicacy and finish. The most important labor of this later time includes "The Princess," "Maud and Other Poems," "Enoch Arden," the dramas "Becket," "Queen Mary," and "Harold," "Tiresias," "Demeter," "The Foresters," but above all, and most

notably, that grand epic of King Arthur's time, — "The Idylls of the King." In the latter, the most characteristic, and perhaps the most permanent, of Tennyson's work, the poet manifests his historic sense and love for England's legendary past, and achieves his design not only to glorify it, but to imbue it with a deep ethical motive and underlying purpose, the expression of his own chivalrous, knightly soul and strenuous, thoughtful, and blameless life. In these splendid tales of knight-errantry we have the full flower of the poet's genius, narrated in the true romantic spirit, but with an ideality and imagination quite Tennysonian, and with a spiritualistic touch in harmony with "the voice of the age" that reminds us that, —

> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

It is with such themes and speculations that Tennyson has powerfully and impressively influenced his age. Beyond and above the mere artistry of the poet, we recognize his interest in man's higher, spiritual being, his love for nature, and awe in contemplating the heights and depths of infinite time and space, ever looking upward and inward at the mysteries of the world behind the phenomena of sense. It is difficult, in set theological terms, to define the poet's creed, though we know

that he was won by the Broad Church teaching of his friends, Frederick Robertson and Denison Maurice, and had himself many a battle to fight with honest doubts until — as his 'Crossing the Bar' shows us — he finally conquered and laid them. But while there is an absence of definite doctrine in his work there is no question about his religious convictions or of his belief in the eternal verities, the immanence of God in man and the universe. Throughout his poems he assumes the existence of a great Spirit and recognizes that our souls are a part of Him, however Faith at times seems to veil her face from the poet, and all appears a mystery, though a mystery presided over by infinite Power and Love. The great problems of metaphysics and of man's origin and destiny, we are told, occupied much of his thought, and he dwelt upon them with eager, intense interest, and touched upon them with great candor, earnestness, and truthfulness. No sophistry could shake his belief in man's immortality, for without belief in this doctrine the human race, he was convinced, had not incentive enough to virtue, while all man's inspirations were otherwise meaningless. For the doctrine of Evolution, in its materialistic aspect, he had nothing but scorn, though he accepted it in the more spiritual guise with which Russel Wallace propounded it. If we come from the brutes we are nevertheless linked with the Divine, he believed, and it was the

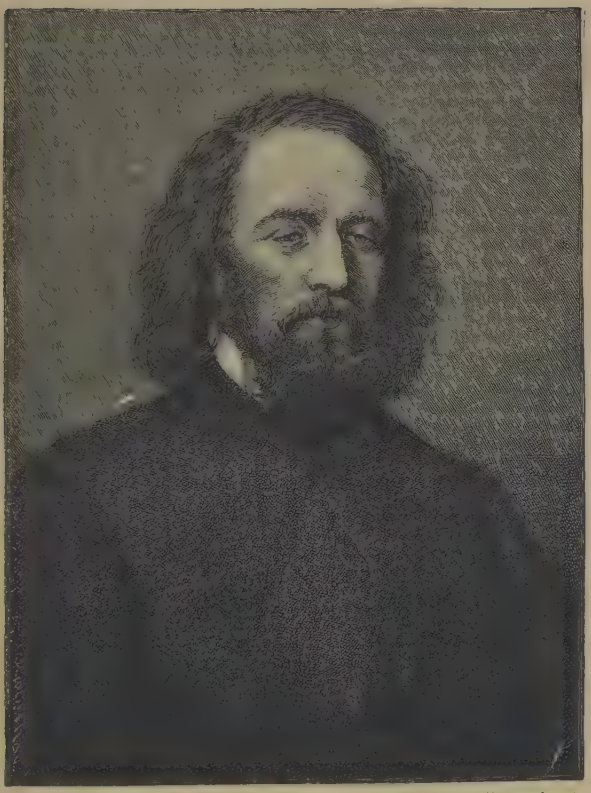
Divine in man that was to conquer the brute within him, and, in the upward struggle, work out salvation. So, in the realm of physical science, on the principles of which, as Huxley tells us, he had a great grasp, the poet, while appalled by the mystery, accepts and indeed rejoices in its truths, though he cannot acquiesce in a godless world or in the denial of a life to come, in which the race, through infinite love, shall be brought into union with God.

But leaving here Tennyson's speculations and beliefs, — a most interesting part of the poet's analytical and reflective character, — let us look for a little at the man personally, and record briefly the chief incidents in his quiet though ideal home-life. To those who know the Memoir by his son, Hallam Tennyson, — a memoir that while paying honor to filial reverence and devotion is at the same time and in all respects most worthy of its high theme, — the events in the poet's life will hardly need dwelling upon, though they throw much light on, and impart the distinction of a high dignity to, the Laureate's work. The life Hallam Tennyson describes was, we know, not lived in the public eye, and was wholly without sensational elements or any of the vapid interests which usually attach to a man whose name is, in a special sense, public property, and about whom the world was eagerly, and often officiously, curious. The life the poet lived, in a popular sense, lacked all that

usually attracts the masses, for he was personally little known to his generation, rarely seen among large gatherings of the people, and, great Englishman as he was, was almost a stranger, in his later years at least, in the English metropolis, or, if we except the seats of the universities, in any of the chief towns of the kingdom. And yet, in another and a higher sense, the century has hardly known among its many intellectual forces one that has been more influential in its effect upon literary art, or in certain directions has more potently influenced the ideals and more profoundly given expression to the ethical and philosophic thought of the time. Secluded as his life was, it was one not of obscurity or of mere asceticism; on the contrary, it was rich in all the elements that make for a great reputation, and ever devoted to strenuous, elevating purpose, and to an ideal poetic career.

So far as his tastes and opportunity offered, Tennyson's life, moreover, was enriched by many wise and noble friendships, and by intimacy with not a few of the best and most thoughtful minds of his age. It was spent, we rejoice to think also, in unceasing toil in and for his high art, with a resulting productiveness which proved the extent and varied range of his labors as well as the mastery of his craft.

Until the appearance of the biography referred to, we had known the Laureate almost wholly through his



After the painting by G. F. Watts, R. A.

ALFRED (LORD) TENNYSON

books. Now, thanks to the authoritative record of his accomplished surviving son, we know the poet as he lived, and feel that behind his writings there is a personality of the most interesting and impressive kind. It is a personality such as consorts with the opinions which most thoughtful readers of Tennyson's writings must have had of one of the greatest and serenest minds of the age, — a poet who, aside from the splendor of his workmanship and the beauty and melody of his verse, has greatly enriched the poetic literature of the century, and has, we feel, given profound thought to the intellectual problems and spiritual aspirations of his era. Nor does the Memoir, as a revelation of the poet's intellectual and personal life, fall away, on any page of it, from the high plane on which it has been prepared and written. There is no undue invasion, which a son's pride might be apt to make, of domestic privacy, and no dealing with irrelevant topics or elaboration of those set forth with becoming modesty and restraint; far less is there the discussion of any subject, for a trivial or vain purpose. Throughout the work we meet with no unnecessary lifting of veils or treatment of themes merely to satisfy morbid curiosity. Everywhere there is the evidence of sound judgment, unimpeachable taste, and a wholesome sanity. This is especially the case in the frank revelation of the poet's views on religion and his attitude towards scientific and theological thought, to

which we have ourselves referred. In this respect, a large debt is due to the biographer for setting before the reader, not only the high ethical purpose which Tennyson had in view in selecting the themes of his poems and in the mode of handling them, but, as we have said, in showing us what beyond peradventure were his religious opinions, and, despite a certain curtaining of gloom, how profoundly he was influenced by faith in the Divine life. Nor is the least interest in the Memoir to be found in the light the biographer throws on the poet's writings as a whole — how they were conceived and elaborated, and on the often hidden meaning that underlies some of the most thoughtful verse. This, to students of the Laureate's writings, is of high value, in addition to the service rendered by the biographer in tracing in his father's poetic work the influences which fashioned it and the pains he took to give it its marvellous beauty and artistic finish of expression.

It is this instructive as well as skilled and dignified treatment, with the vast literary and deep personal interest in the life, that will commend the Memoir to all who are proud of the Laureate's fame, and wished to have nothing written that was unworthy of either the poet or the man, or that would in the least detract from his laurels. Nor does the restraint which the biographer imposes upon himself conceal from us the man in his human aspects, or lead him to set before the

reader an imaginary, rather than a veritable and real, portraiture. We have a picture, it is true, of an almost ideal domestic life, and of a man of rare gifts and fine culture, whose work and career have been and are the pride and glory of the English-speaking race. But we have also the story of an author not free from human weaknesses, and though endowed with manifold and great gifts, yet who had to labor long and earnestly to perfect himself in his art, and in his early years had much discouragement and not a little adversity to contend with. With all the toil and stress his early years had known, when success came to the poet no one was less unspoiled by it; and when sunshine fell upon and gilded his life, maturing years brought him serenity, happiness, and, at length, peace.

Alfred Tennyson was born at his father's rectory, Somersby, Lincolnshire, August 6, 1809. He was the fourth of twelve children, seven of whom were sons, two of them, Frederick and Charles, being endowed, like Alfred, with poetic gifts. The poet's mother, a woman of sweet and tender disposition, had much to do in moulding the future Laureate's character; while from his father, a man of fine culture, he received not only much of his education, but his bent towards a recluse, bookish career. Alfred was from his earliest days a retired, shy child, fond of reading and given to

rhyming, and with a characteristic love of nature and of quiet rural life. Later on he had a passion for the sea-coast, and for those scenes of storm and stress about the seagirt shores of old England which he was so feelingly and with such poetic beauty to depict in "Sea Dreams," and in those incomparable songs, embodiments at once of sorrow and of faith, 'Break, break, break,' and 'Crossing the Bar.' Besides the education he received from his scholarly father, and at a school at Louth for four years, young Tennyson spent some years at Trinity College, Cambridge, where, though he did not take a degree, he won in 1829 the Chancellor's medal for the best English poem of the year, the subject of which was 'Timbuctoo.' At college he had the good fortune to number among his friends several men who later in life were, like himself, to rise to eminence, — such as Henry Alford (afterwards Dean of Canterbury), R. C. Trench (later Archbishop of Dublin), C. Merivale (historian and Dean of Ely), Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), James Spedding (editor of Lord Bacon's Works), Macaulay, Thackeray, and, most endeared of all, Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian, whose memory Tennyson has immortalized in "In Memoriam." With him at college was also his brother Charles, one year his senior, with whom he collaborated in the collection of verse, issued in 1827, under the title of "Poems by Two Brothers." In 1830,

Tennyson made a journey to the Pyrenees with Arthur Hallam, who was engaged to the poet's sister Emilia, and in the same year he published an independent volume, entitled "Poems chiefly Lyrical." In this, his first venture alone in poetry, and in another issued in 1832, Tennyson was to manifest to the world his poetic powers and art, for they contained, besides much rhythmical and contemplative verse, such poems as 'Mariana,' 'Claribel,' 'Lilian,' 'Lady Clare,' 'The Lotus Eaters,' 'A Dream of Fair Women,' 'The May Queen,' and 'The Miller's Daughter.' In spite of the great promise bodied forth in these works, the volumes were subject to not a little unfavorable criticism, which stayed his further publishing for a period of ten years, though not the furtherance of his creative work, nor his enthusiastic efforts towards increasing the perfection of his art.

It was not until 1842 that the poet again appeared in print, this time with a volume to which he appended his name, "Poems by Alfred Tennyson," and which gave him high rank among the acknowledged singers of his day, — Wordsworth, Southey, Landor, Campbell, Rogers, and Leigh Hunt, in England; and in the New World, Longfellow, Bryant, Lowell, Whittier, and Emerson. The poet-contemporaries of his youth — Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats — had by this time all died, and in 1843 Southey died, when

Wordsworth, whom Tennyson reverenced, became Poet Laureate. The gap occasioned by the death of these early English poets of the century was now to be filled in large measure by Tennyson, though among the writers of song to arise were the Brownings, Rossetti, Matthew Arnold, and Swinburne. Critical appreciation of the volume of 1842 was happily encouraging to the poet; indeed, it was most gratifying, for its many remarkable beauties were now justly and adequately appraised, particularly such fine new themes as the volume contained — 'Ulysses,' 'Godiva,' 'The Two Voices,' 'The Talking Oak,' 'Œnone,' 'Locksley Hall,' 'The Vision of Sin,' and 'Morte D'Arthur,' the germ of the future "Idylls of the King." Nor on this side the Atlantic did the new volume lack substantial recognition, and from such competent critics as Emerson and Hawthorne; while among his English contemporaries Tennyson became, if we except for the time Wordsworth, the acknowledged head of English song. At this period the poet resided in London or its neighborhood, his family home in Lincolnshire having been broken up in 1837, six years after the death of his father. Here, in spite of the secluded life he led, he became a notable figure in literary circles, and greatly increased the range of his friends, correspondents, and admirers. Among the latter were the Carlyles, Thomas and his clever wife Jane being especially drawn to the

poet, and to them we owe interesting sketches of the personal appearance of Tennyson at this time. Mrs. Carlyle, in one of her delightful letters gossiping about Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton, and Tennyson, esteems the latter "the greatest genius of the three," adding that "besides, he is a very handsome man, and a noble-hearted one, with something of the gypsy in his appearance, which for me is perfectly charming." This is the historian, her husband's, piece of portraiture: "A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-colored, shaggy-headed man, dusty, smoky, free-and-easy; who swims, outwardly and inwardly, with great composure in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco smoke; great now and then when he does emerge; a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man." Another portrait we have from the Chelsea philosopher and scorner of shams which describes the poet very humanly as "one of the finest-looking men in the world, with a great shock of rough, dusky, dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive, aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous. I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will

grow to." Besides the Carlyles and other notable contemporaries, Tennyson numbered at this time among his intimates John Sterling, whose life was written by the author of "Sartor Resartus," James Spedding, Bacon's editor, who wrote a fine critique of the 1842 volume of poems for the Edinburgh Review, Aubrey De Vere, Edmund Lushington, A. P. Stanley (afterwards Dean of Westminster), and Edward Fitzgerald, the future translator of the "Rubaiyat," or Quatrains of the Persian Poet, Omar Khayyam. These were all enthusiastic admirers of Tennyson's work and art, and his close personal friends, who have left on record many interesting sketches of the poet in their published writings, or in letters to him, and especially in reminiscences furnished for the Memoir by the poet's son.

Nine years before the appearance of the 1842 volume of Tennyson's verse the poet's bosom friend, Arthur Hallam, died at an immature age at Vienna, and his death was the subject of much brooding in noble, elegiac verse, written, as was Milton's 'Lycidas,' to commemorate the loss of one very dear to the poet. In "In Memoriam," as all know, Tennyson sought to assuage his grief and give fine, artistic expression to his profound sorrow at the loss of his companion and friend; but the work is more than a labored monument of woe, since it enshrines reflections of the most exalted and

inspiring character on the eternally momentous themes of life, death, and immortality. The work was published in 1850, and it at once challenged the admiration of the world for the perfection of its art, no less than for its high contemplative beauty. This was the year when Wordsworth passed to the grave, and Tennyson, in his room, was given the English laureateship. In this year, also, we find him happily married to Emily S. Sellwood, a lady of Berks, to whom the poet had been engaged since 1837. With his bride he took up house at Twickenham, near London, where his son, Hallam Tennyson, was born in 1852. In the following year he removed to Farringford, on the Isle of Wight, which was to be his home for forty years, and where, as his son tells us, some of his best-known works were written. Here, in 1854, his second son, Lionel, was born, whose young life of promise was terminated by jungle fever thirty-two years later on a return voyage from India, — all that was mortal of him finding repose in the depths of the Red Sea. To complete the chief incidents in the poet's personal career, we may here record that while Tennyson acquired another home at Aldworth, Surrey, — where he died Oct. 6, 1892, followed some four years later by his wife, — his happiest days were spent at Farringford, the pilgrimage place of many eminent worshippers of the poet's muse, where was dispensed an unostentatious

but open-handed and genial British hospitality. It should be added that, besides the perquisites which attach to the office of the Poet Laureate, Tennyson was given from 1845 a pension of £200 ($1000) and that, while in 1865 he refused a baronetcy, in 1884 he accepted a peerage, and had the honor of burial (Oct. 12, 1892) in Westminster Abbey.

We now revert to the poet's early, or, rather, to his middle-age, creative years, and to a résumé of his principal writings, with a brief, running comment on his message and art. In 1847, three years before he became Laureate, he published "The Princess," a charming narrative poem in blank verse, which, though it abounds in fine descriptions and has an obvious moral in the treatment of the theme, — the woman question of to-day, — is inherently lacking in unity and strength, as well as weak in the depicting of the characters. In later editions the poem was amended in several faulty respects, and was especially enriched by the insertion between the cantos of many lovely and now familiar songs, which serve not only to bind together the whole structure of the poem, but to enhance and enforce its high moral meaning. Any analysis of "The Princess" is here deemed unnecessary, since it must not only be familiar to most readers of the poet's works, but familiar also in the varied annotated editions of such editors as Rolfe, Woodberry, and Wilson Farrand.

Familiar, it is believed, also, that it will be to Tennysonian students in the "Study of the Princess," with critical and explanatory notes by Dr. S. E. Dawson, of Montreal (now of Ottawa, Canada), — an able commentary which received the approval of Lord Tennyson himself, and elicited from him a highly interesting letter to the author on points in the poem either misunderstood or not discerningly apprehended by other critics and reviewers. The purport of the poem, it may be said, however, is to frown upon revolutionary attempts to alter the position of women, of scholastically be-gowned and college-capped dames, who would seek by other than nature's ways to put the sex upon an equality with man, while repressing their own individuality, doing violence to their maternal instincts, and trampling upon their "gracious household ways." In the handling of the "medley" Tennyson brings into exercise not only his far-seeing powers, which were greatly in advance of his time, but his gifts of raillery and humor, especially in the early divisions of the poem, as well as his high, serious motives in the moral lessons to which he points in the later cantos, where he aims at the elevation of women in correspondence with the diversity of their natures, for, as he himself says, "Woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse." His ideal of perfect womanhood he would attain through the awakening power of the affections and the trans-

forming power of love, rather than by ignoring the difference of physique, founding women's universities, and becoming blue-stockinged high priestesses of learning. Of the medley of characters in the poem, poet-princes in disguise at the college, violet-hooded lady principals,

> "With prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,
> And sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair,"

it is Lady Psyche's child that is the true, effective heroine of the story, as Dr. Dawson aptly points out. "Ridiculous in the lecture room, the babe in the poem, as in the songs, is made the central point upon which the plot turns, for the unconscious child is the concrete embodiment of Nature herself, clearing away all merely intellectual theories by her silent influence." This is the explanation, then, of the appearance of the babe — symbol of the power and tenderness of Nature — in critical passages of the poem, as well as in the unsurpassably beautiful intercalary songs, for it is the child that enables the poet to soften the Princess's nature toward the Prince, and to effect the reconciliation between the Princess and Lady Psyche, while imparting beauty as well as high meaning in the recital of the incidents and development of the tale.

"In Memoriam," as we have stated, appeared in 1850, and was unique in its appeal to the mind of the era as a stately meditative poem on a single theme, — the

death of the poet's friend, Arthur Hallam. The English language, if we except Milton's 'Lycidas' and 'Hymn to the Nativity,' and Wordsworth's grand 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality,' has no poem so noble or so faultless in its art as this magnificent series of detached elegies. The high thought, philosophic reflection, and passionate religious sentiment that mark the whole work, added to the exquisiteness of the versification, place it wellnigh supreme in the literature of elegiac poetry. Its grave, majestic hymnal measure adds to its solemn beauty and stateliness, while the varied phases of spiritualized thought and emotional grief which find expression in the poem seem to elevate it in its harmonies to the rank of a profound psalm-chant from the choir of heaven. In the sumptuously embellished edition of the elegy, embodying Mr. Harry Fenn's drawings, with a sympathetic preface by the Rev. Dr. Henry Van Dyke, there is a brief but luminous analysis of the nine divisions of the poem, or commentary on the great classic. To those who desire to read the great elegy understandingly, the value of Dr. Van Dyke's work is earnestly commended, since without this commentary, or such as are to be obtained in other critical sources, there is much of poetic beauty, of sorrow-brooding thought, and especially of emotional reflection on life, death, and immortality, in the hundred and thirty lyrics of which the poem consists, which will be lost to

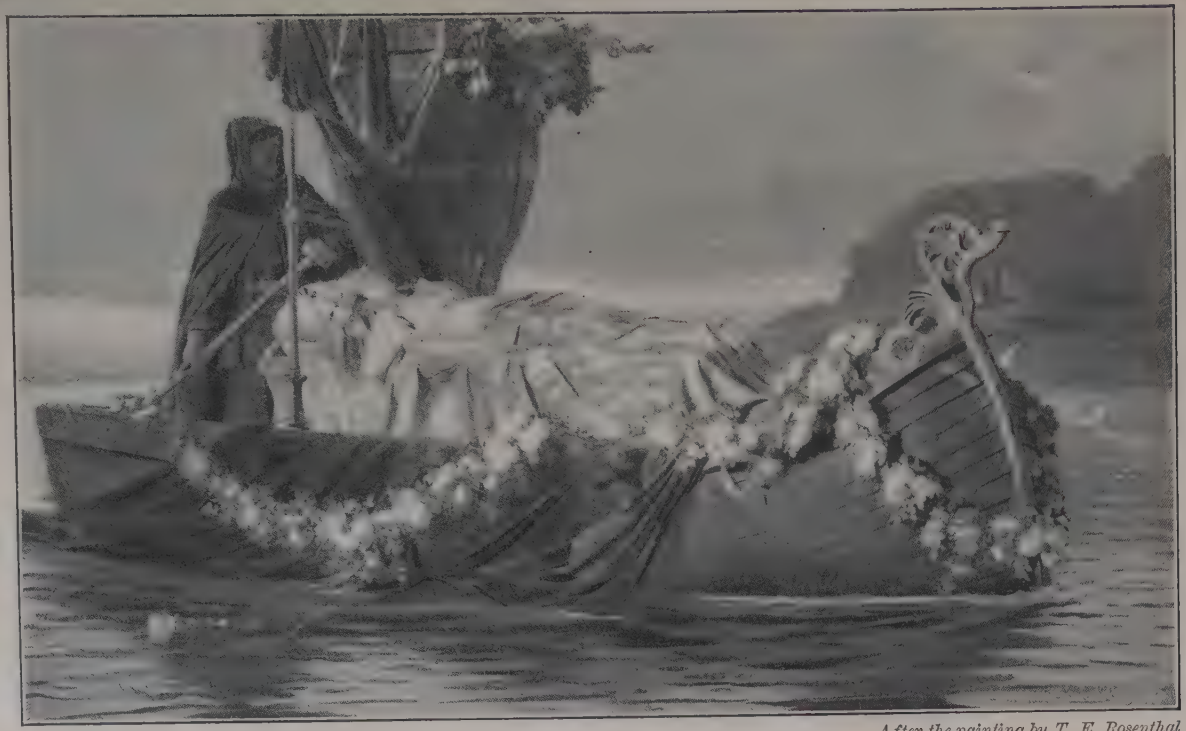
even the thoughtful reader. The poem, as a critic truthfully observes, has done much "to express and to consolidate all that is best in the life of England, its domestic affection, its patriotic feeling, its healthful morality, its rational and earnest religion."

The sentimental metrical romance "Maud" appeared in 1855 (the year of the Crimean War), with some additional poems, including 'The Charge of the Light Brigade,' written after Raglan's repulse of the Russians at Balaclava, and the fine 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.' The lyrical love-drama, "Maud," we are told, was one of Tennyson's favorite productions, of which he was wont to read parts to his guests. As the poet has himself said of the monodrama, "it is a little Hamlet," "the history of a morbid poetic soul, under the blighting influence of a recklessly speculative age. He is the heir of madness, an egotist with the makings of a cynic, raised to sanity by a pure and holy love which elevates his whole nature, passing from the heights of triumph to the lowest depths of misery, driven into madness by the loss of her whom he has loved, and when he has at length passed through the fiery furnace, and has recovered his reason, giving himself up to work for the good of mankind through the unselfishness born of his great passion." The poem, when it appeared, was reviled by some critics as an allegory of the war with Russia, and they did its author the injustice of suppos-

ing that he lauded war for war's sake, instead of, as is the case, applauding war only in defence of liberty. Apart from this misunderstanding, due to abhorrence of the war-frenzy of the period, the poem has outlived the mistaken objections to it when it appeared, and is now admired in its vindicated light, and especially for the rich and copious beauty manifest throughout the work, and for the magnificent lyric art with which it is composed.

We now come to Tennyson's masterpiece, the "Idylls of the King," an epic of chivalry, interpreted as personifying in its various characters the soul at war with the senses. These appeared during the years 1859 and 1872. Each of the Idylls, which has a connecting thread binding it to its fellow-allegory, takes its plot or fable from the legendary lore that has clustered round the name of Arthur, mythical King of the Britons about the era of the first invasion by the English. Out of the mass of material which was gathered by Sir Thomas Malory for his prose history of Arthur and his Knights, Tennyson takes the chief incidents and noblest heroic traits of character in the legends and blends them in a fashion of his own, steeping them in an atmosphere which his imagination creates, and lighting up all with a passion and glory of knightly adventure, as well as with a chasteness, purity, and high fervor of ethical thought, that must perpetuate the romance as he has

given it us, unto all time. The sections of the work as it now stands, in addition to its introductory dedication to the late Prince Consort, and the closing poem to the late Queen Victoria, are as follows: 'The Coming of Arthur,' which relates the mystery of the birth of the King, his marriage to Guinevere, daughter of Leodogran, King of Cameliard, and the wonders attending his crowning and establishment on the throne; next comes 'Gareth and Lynette,' a tale of love and scorn, and of the conflict between a false pride and a true ambition; to this is appended 'The Marriage of Geraint,' of Arthur's court, and a member of the great order of the Round Table. Next follows 'Geraint and Enid,'— Enid, the gentle and timid, whom Geraint had married after wooing the haughty Lynette, — a tale of pure and loyal womanhood, darkened for awhile by the clouds of jealousy and suspicion, yet closing happily long after the "spiteful whispers" had died down, and Geraint, assured of Enid's fealty, had ruled his kingdom well and gone forth to "crown a happy life with a fair death" against the heathen of the Northern Sea, "fighting for the blameless King." The next Idyll relates how the venerable magician Merlin succumbs to the thrall of the wily harlot Vivien, decked in her rare robe of samite, and yields to her the charm which was his secret. 'Lancelot and Elaine' follows with its conflict between the virgin innocence of Elaine, the lily maid of



After the painting by T. E. Rosenthal

TENNYSON'S "ELAINE"

"THE DEAD STEERED BY THE DUMB, WENT UPWARD WITH THE FLOOD"

Astolat, and the guilty passion of the noble though erring Lancelot. To this, in order, succeeds 'The Holy Grail,' telling of the vain quest of Arthur's Knights for the sacred relic. Despite its mystic character, this is admittedly one of the finest of the series of Idylls, and rich in its spiritual teaching, — that the heavenly vision is to be seen only by the eyes of purity and grace. 'Pelleas and Ettarre' is a tale of dole, showing the evil at work at the court, and the wrecking effect of another woman's perfidy. 'The Last Tournament' has for its hero the court fool, who, amid the treason of Arthur's knights, is firm in his loyal allegiance to the King. In contrast to him is Sir Tristram, who, despite his prowess, in jousts on the tilting-field, is "one to whom faith is foolishness, and the higher life an idle delusion." The climax is reached in 'Guinevere,' whom, in spite of her faithlessness and guilty intrigue with Lancelot, Arthur, with his great high soul, pityingly loves and forgives. The end comes with the sad though shadowy 'Passing of Arthur,' the royal barge mysteriously carrying him out into the beyond, whence issue sounds of hail and greeting to the victor-hero

> "—— as if some fair city were one voice
> Around a king returning from his wars."

In 1864 Tennyson published "Enoch Arden," an idyll of the hearth, depicting a pathetic incident in a seafarer's career, of much simple idyllic beauty. The poem

has some fine descriptive passages, and many examples of the poet's rich word-painting in treating of the splendid tropic scenery among which the mariner is for the time cast. The volume contained also some minor pieces, including the dialect poem, 'The Northern Farmer,' with its humorous rendering of yokel speech. This was followed (1875–84) by three dramas on English historical themes, which, as the poet had not, as we have already hinted, the gifts of a Shakespeare, were somewhat unsuccessful, though written, despite Tennyson's advanced years, with much fine force and vividness of character delineation. These dramas (to enumerate them in their historic order) were "Harold," "Becket," and "Queen Mary." "Becket" is the best and most ambitious of them, though not, as "Queen Mary" is, a play designed for the stage. It is a vigorous Englishman's closet study of a prolonged and bitter struggle — the conflict in Henry II.'s time between the church and the crown — as exhibited in the person and dominant ecclesiastical attitude of the audacious prelate who met his tragic end by Canterbury's altar. "Harold" strikingly realizes to the modern reader the stirring activities of a strenuous time, — that of the English conquest by Norman William, opposed to the death by Harold at Senlac in 1066. The drama is as rich in character as it is swift and energetic in action. "Queen Mary" deals with the religious and

political dissensions (the struggle between the Papacy and the Reformation) of Mary Tudor's era, with her love for and marriage with Philip of Spain, and her hopeless yearning for an heir to the double crown of England and Spain. An important and prized addition to our English literature the drama undoubtedly is, but it is not more than a careful, accurate, and elaborate historical study. It lacks, both in spirit and movement, the characteristics of the Shakespearian drama. Its characters, however, are vividly brought out, and its situations are often picturesque and telling. The personages, moreover, are wanting in the play of creative effect, and the incidents lack the stir of inventive resource. Further, though the story of Mary's life is essentially dramatic, and the incidents of her reign are tragic in the extreme, the poet does not seem to have extracted from either that which goes to the making of a great drama. This evidently is the result of following too faithfully the events of history and the records of the time, as well as, in some degree, from want of sympathy, which Tennyson could not impart, with the leading characters and their actions. Still, much is made of the materials; and though the personages and incidents appear in the narrative in the neutral tints of history, yet the period is made to reappear with a freshness and distinctness which, while it satisfies the scholar, gives a true charm to every lover of the drama.

Again and again, as we read, are we reminded of the Laureate's rare poetical fancy and fine literary instinct, and the dialogues contain many passages of striking thought and noble utterance. But the work is overcast by the great gloom of its central figure, — the gloom of bigotry, passion, jealousy, disappointment, and despair which ever environs the miserable Queen; and much though the poet has striven to brighten the picture and awaken sympathy for the weakness of the woman, who, royal mistress though she was, could not command her love to be requited, the poetic measure of his lines roughens and hardens to the close, when the curtain falls on what is felt to be a tragic and unlovely life.

We can only briefly refer to the other *dramatis personæ* introduced to us, who are among the notable historical characters that figure during Mary Tudor's reign. They are those who take part in the incidents, religious, civil, and political, of the period, and are, for the most part, both in speech and bearing, true portraits familiar to us in Mr. Froude's history. Of these the most pleasing is the Princess Elizabeth, whose portrait is drawn with masterly skill, and engages our interest as the fortunes of its original oscillates "'Twixt Axe and Crown": —

> "A Tudor
> Schooled by the shadow of death, a Boleyn too
> Glancing across the Tudor."

But, aside from the interest in the safety of her person, which is in constant jeopardy from the jealousy of her half-sister, Elizabeth wins upon the reader by her modest, maidenly bearing, her frankness of manner, and by a playfulness of disposition which readily adapts itself to the restraints which the Queen is ever placing upon her person, and which endears her to the people, who, could the hated Mary be got rid of, would fain become her subjects. The civil strife of the period furnishes material for some powerful passages, which are wrought up with excellent effect, and in this connection Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sir Thomas Stafford, the Earl of Devon, Sir William Cecil, and other historical personages appear upon the stage. The other incidents introduced are those which attach themselves to the religious persecutions of the time, and which brought Cranmer to the stake, and give play to the papal intrigues of Pole, Gardiner, and the emissaries of the Spanish court. The second and third scenes in the fourth act devoted to Cranmer, which detail his martyrdom, are hardly so satisfactory as we think they might have been, though the poet here again follows closely the historical accounts. The scenes, however, give occasion for the introduction of a couple of local gossips whose provincial dialect and keen interest in the national and religious policy of the time, here as in occasional street scenes, are cleverly portrayed. This sapient reflection

in the mouth of one of these gossips, Tib, is a specimen at hand: —

"A-burnin' and a-burnin', and a-making o' volk madder and madder; but tek thou my word vor 't, Joan, — and I bean't wrong not twice i' ten year, — the burnin' o' the owld archbishop 'ill burn the Pwoap out o' this 'ere land for iver and iver."

Philip we have not spoken of; but he fills such a hateful niche in the historical gallery of the time, and the poet introduces him but to act his pitiful rôle, that we pass him by, though many of the grandest passages in the drama are those which give expression to Mary's passionate love for him, and her longing desire for an issue of their marriage, which afterwards culminates in her madness and death.

We have to speak of but one other character in the drama, whose death, it has been said, was sufficient to honor and to dishonor an age. The beautiful Lady Jane Grey appears for a little among the shadows of the poem, and moves to her tragic fate.

> "Seventeen, — a rose of grace!
> Girl never breathed to rival such a rose!
> Rose never blew that equalled such a bud."

A few songs of genuine Tennysonian harmony, pitched in the keys that most fittingly suit the singer's mood, are interspersed through the drama, and serve to relieve the narratives of their gloom and plaint. Their

presence, we cannot help thinking, recalls work better done, and more within the limitations of the poet's genius, than this drama of "Queen Mary." As a dramatic representation the drama had the advantage of being produced at the Lyceum Theatre, London, with all the historic art and sumptuous stage-setting with which Sir Henry Irving could well give it, — Irving himself personating Philip, while Miss Bateman took the part of Queen Mary. "Becket," we should here add, was also given on the stage, and with much dramatic effectiveness, by Irving, — over fifty performances of it being called for. None of the dramas, however, as we have said, was a success, though each has its merit, while all are distinguished by many passages of noble and strenuous thought.

Other dramatic compositions the poet attempted, though of minor importance to the trilogy just spoken of. These were "The Falcon," the groundwork of which is to be found in "The Decameron;" "The Cup," a tragedy, rich in action, with an incisive dialogue, borrowed from Plutarch. The former was staged by Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, and had a run of sixty-seven nights; the latter also was staged with liberal magnificence, by Irving, and met with considerable success. "The Promise of May" is another play which was staged, in 1882, by Mrs. Bernard Beere, but met with failure by the critics, owing, in some degree, to its supposed caricature

of modern agnostics, and to the repellent portrayal of one of the characters in the piece, the sensualist, Philip Edgar. Later, in (1892) appeared "The Foresters," a pretty pastoral play, on the theme of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, which was produced on the boards in New York by Mr. Daly and his company, with a charming woodland setting. The later publications of the Laureate, in his own distinctive field of verse, embrace "The Lover's Tale" (1879), "Ballads and other Poems" (1880), "Tiresias and Other Poems" (1885), "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" (1886), "Demeter and Other Poems" (1889), and "The Death of Œnone, Akbar's Dream, and Other Poems," in the year of the Poet's death (1892). In these various volumes there is much admirable work and many tuneful lyrics in the old charming, lilting strain, with not a few serious, thoughtful, stately pieces of verse, "the after-glow," as Stedman phrases it, "of a still radiant genius. . . . His after-song," continues this fine critic, "does not wreak itself upon the master passions of love and ambition, and hence fastens less strongly on the thoughts of the young; nor does it come with the unused rhythm, the fresh and novel cadence, that stamped the now hackneyed measure with a lyric's name. Yet, as to its art and imagery, the same effects are there, differing only in a more vigorous method, an intentional roughness, from the individual early verse. The new burthen is termed pes-

simistic, but for all its impatient summary of ills, it ends with a cry of faith."

We must now hasten to a close, delightful as it would be to linger over so attractive a theme, and to dwell upon the personality of one who so uniquely represents the mind, as he has so remarkably influenced the thought, of his age. But considering the length of the present paper, this cannot be. Happily, however, the fruitage is ever with us of the poet's full fourscore years of splendid achievement with the hallowing memory of a forceful, opulent, and blameless life. To few men of the past century can the reflecting mind of a coming time more interestingly or more instructively turn than to this profound thinker and mighty musical singer, steeped as he was in the varied culture of the ages, endowed with great prophetic powers, with phenomenal gifts of poetic expression, and with a soul so attuned to the harmonies of heaven as to make him at once the counsellor and the inspiring teacher of his time. Who, in comparison with him, has so felt the subtle charm, or so interpreted to us the infinite beauty, of the world in which we live, or more impressively deepened in the mind and conscience of the age belief in the verities of religion, while quelling its doubts and quickening its highest hopes and faith? "Tennyson was a passionate believer in the immortal life; this was so real to him that he had no patience with scepticism

on the subject. To question it in his presence was to bring upon one's head a torrent of denunciation and wrath. His great soul was intuitively conscious of spiritual realities, and he could not understand how little soulless microbes of men and women were destitute of his deep perception. Prayer was to him a living fact and power, and some of his words about it are among the noblest ever written. When some one asked him about Christ, he pointed to a flower and said, 'What the sun is to that flower, Christ is to my soul.'"

Apart as he stood from the tumult and the frivolities of his age, he was yet of it, and sensibly and beneficently influenced it for its higher and nobler weal. In politics, as we know, he was a liberal conservative, — a conserver of what was best in the present and the past, and an advancer of all that tended to true and harmonious progress. His knowledge of men and things was wide and deep; in the philosophic thought and even in the science of his time he was deeply read; while he was lovingly interested in all nature, and especially in the common people, whom he often wrote of and touchingly depicted in their humble ways of toil as well as of joy and sorrow. Above all, he was a man of high and real faith, who believed that "good" was "the final goal of ill;" and in "the dumb hour clothed in black" that at last came to him, as it comes to all, he confidingly put his trust in Loving Omnipotence and reverently and

beautifully expressed the hope of seeing the guiding Pilot of his life when, with the outflow of its river-current into the ocean of the Divine Unseen, he crossed the bar. For humanity's sake and the weal of the world in a coming time this was his joyous cry: —

. . . . . .
"Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.
. . . . . .
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.
. . . . . .
Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be!"

What our formative, high-wrought English literature has suffered in Tennyson's passing from the age on which he has shed so much glory those can best say who are of his era, and have been intimate, as each appeared, with every successive issue of his works. To the latter, as to all thoughtful students of his writings, his has been the supreme interpreting voice of the past century, while his influence on the literary thought of his time has been of the highest and most potent kind. Especially influential has Tennyson been in carrying forward, with new impulses and inspiration, the poetic traditions of that grand old motherland of English song to which our own poets in the New World, as well as the younger bards of the British Isles, owe so much. If

we except the Laureate, there have been few who have worn the singing robe of the poet who, in these later years at least, have spoken so impressively to cultured minds on either side of the ocean, or have more effectively expressed to his age the high and hallowing spirit of modern poetry. It is this that has given the Laureate his exalted place among the great literary influences of the century, and made him the one indubitable representative of English song, with all its tuneful music and rare and delicate art. To a few of the great choir of singers of the past Tennyson admittedly owed something, both in tradition and in art, — for each new impulse has caught and embodied not a little of the spirit and temper, as well as the culture and inspiration, of the old, — but his it was to impart new and fresher thought and a wider range of harmony and emotion than had been reached by almost any of his predecessors, and to speak to the mind and soul of his time as none other has spoken or could well speak. From the era of Shakespeare and Milton and their chief successors, it is to Tennyson's honor and fame that he has given continuity as well as high perfection to the great coursing stream of noble British verse.

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